

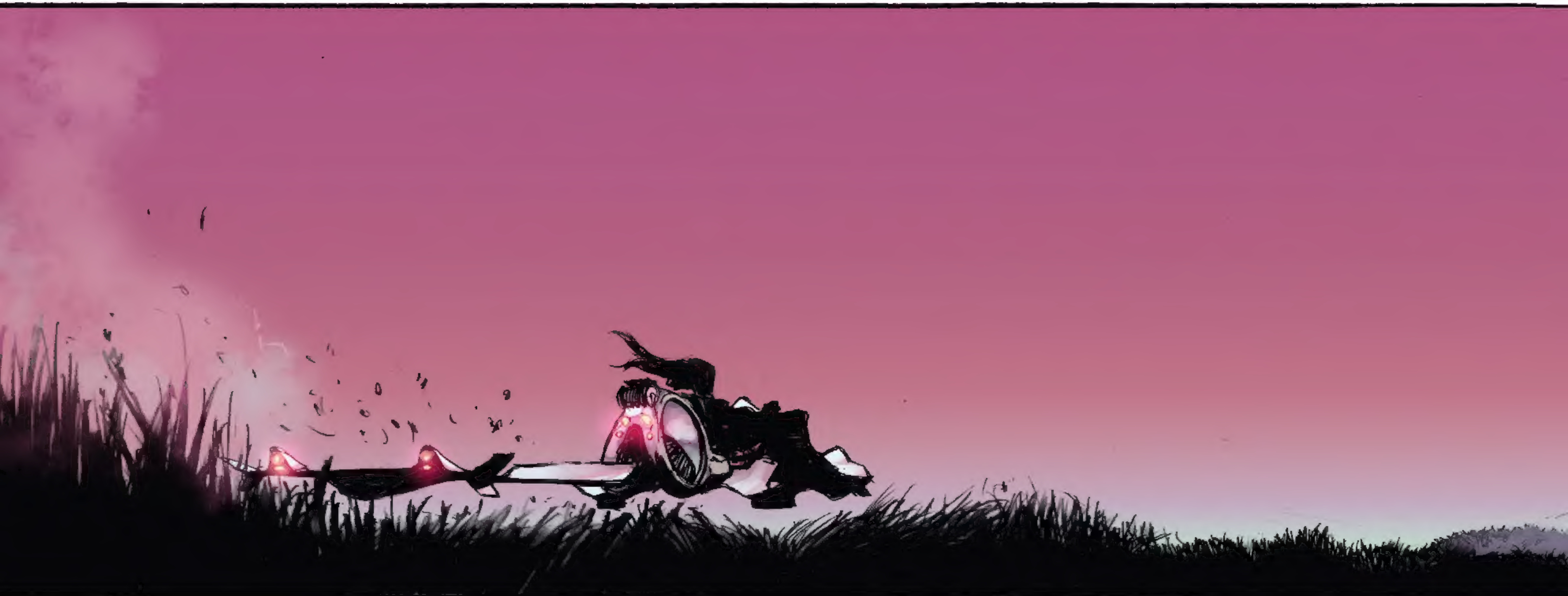
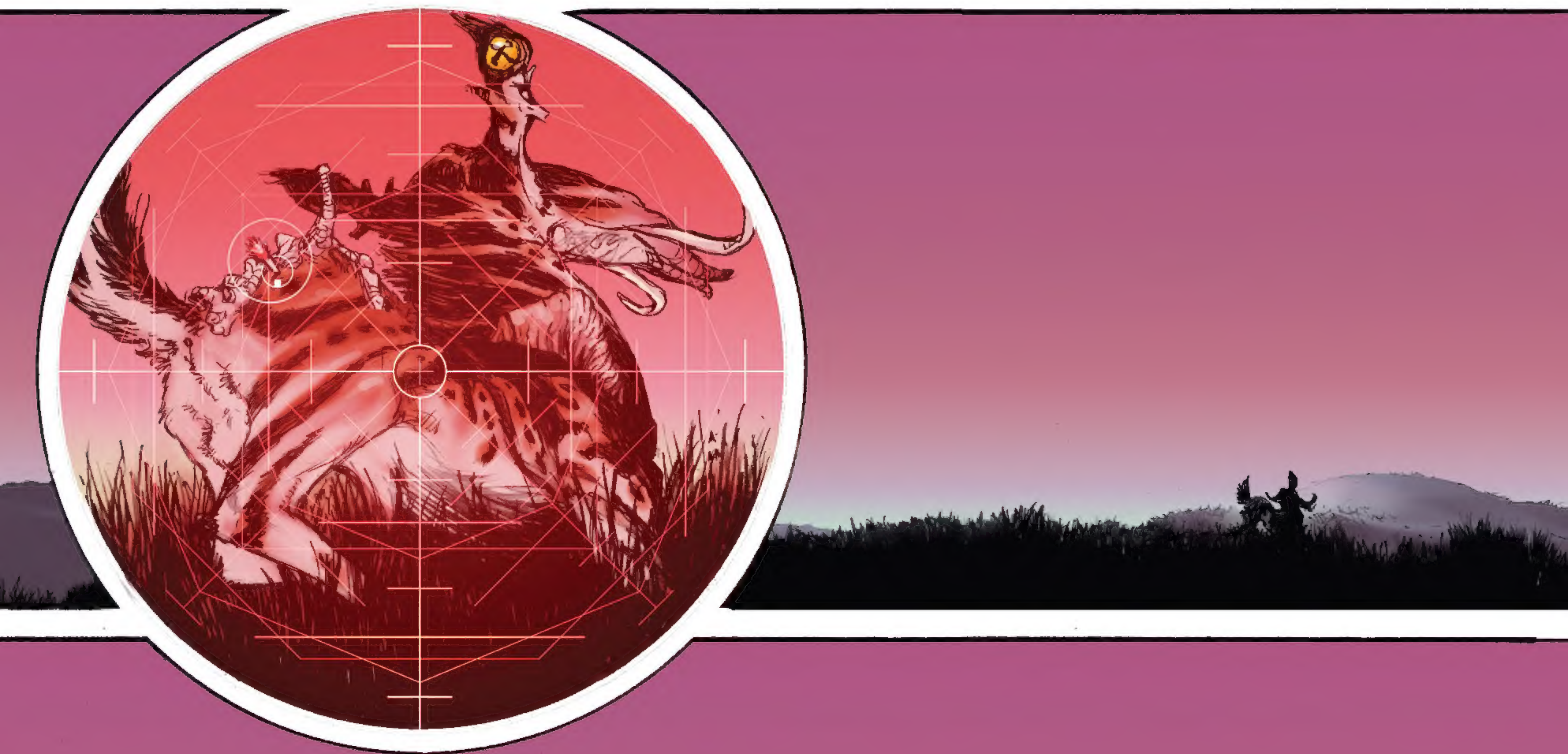


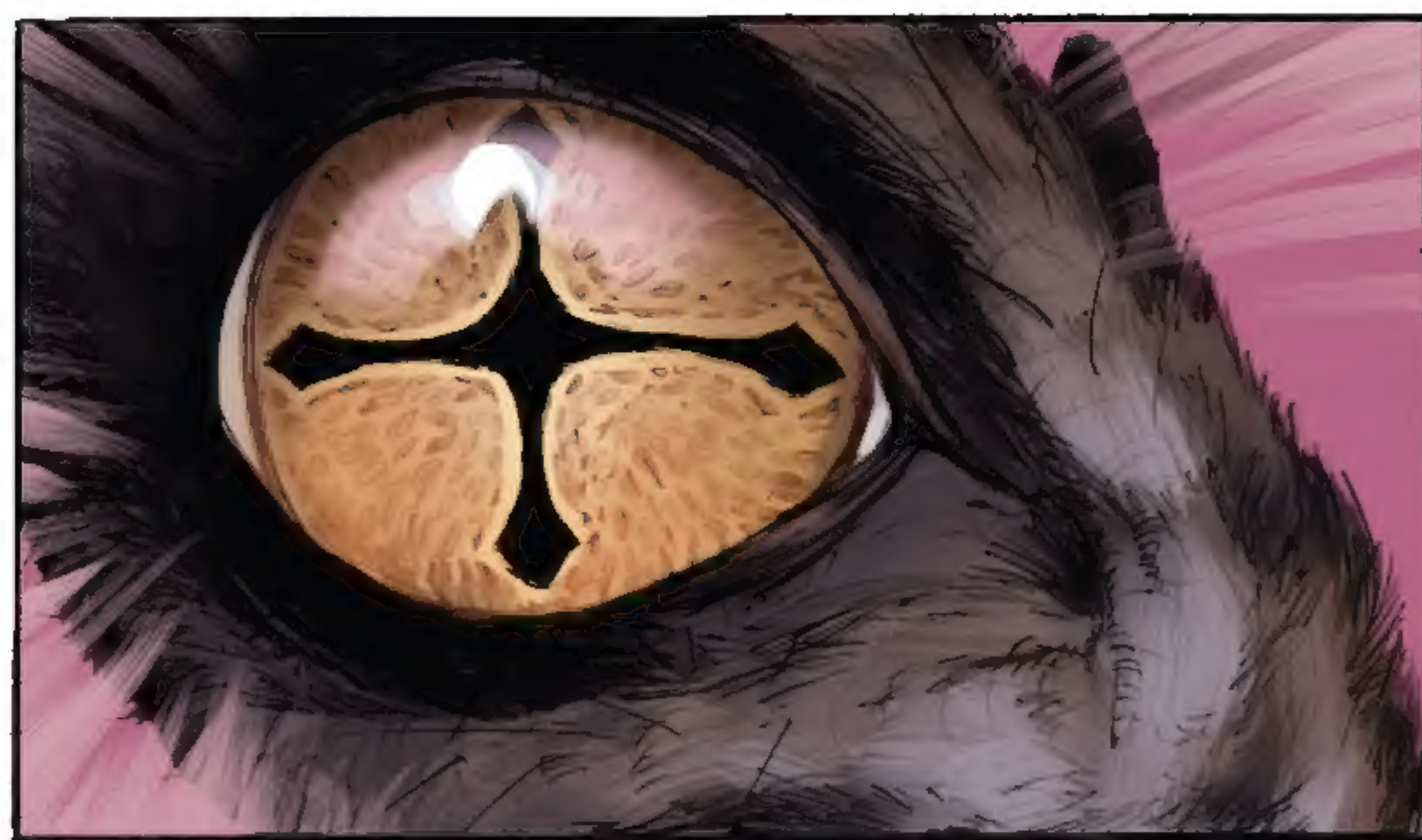
THE ZOOHUNTERS
PRELUDE
"OVERTURES"
story & art PETER STEIGERWALD

lettering JOSH REED
editors VINCE HERNANDEZ
& FRANK MASTROMAURO

NORTHERN HAH'SUFARI
GRAND PLAINS: IDULANI.













AS ORDERED,
NARIV--ONE ATRURK,
PRIME MALE.

BAY 25. DEPOT 14:
LIVE CARGO HOLDING:
POSLAN COSMOPORT.

GOOD. GOOD.
A FINE SPECIMEN.
BURLY, WELL SPIKED,
AND GOOD TUSKS.

OH,
AND JUST TO
WARN YOU...

QAUREC IS
LOOKING FOR
YOU.

I SEE HIM.



WHAT DO
YOU WANT?

MINALARA,
MINALARA...

SO COLD
MY LOVELY.
YET I BRING WARM
SALUTATIONS.



LOOKS LIKE YOU
GOT A BIT OF A SCRAPE.
SUCH A TRAGEDY TO HAPPEN
TO SUCH LOVELY FLESH.

KEEP THAT
HAND MOVING
TOWARD ME
AND LOSE IT
QAUREC.

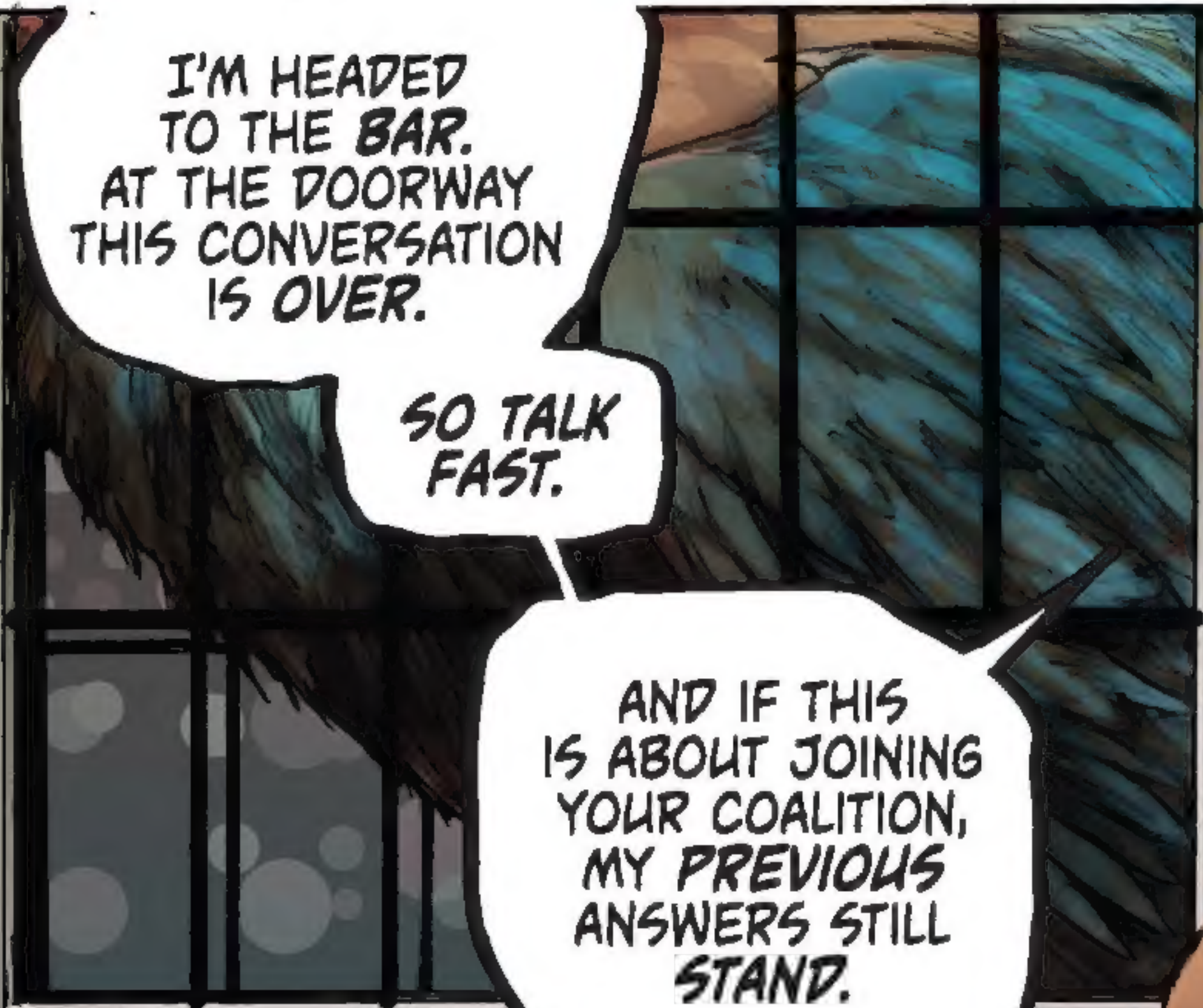
SUCH A
DULCET VOICE
BUT SUCH AN UGLY
TONE-- SUCH A
SHAME.

GET
TO YOUR
POINT.



FAIR ENOUGH.
I AM ONLY AN
ADMIRER OF YOUR
INCANDESCENCE.

WALK WITH
ME.



I'M HEADED
TO THE **BAR**.
AT THE DOORWAY
THIS CONVERSATION
IS OVER.

SO TALK
FAST.

AND IF THIS
IS ABOUT JOINING
YOUR COALITION,
MY **PREVIOUS**
ANSWERS STILL
STAND.

YOU ARE MISSING
A **FINE** OPPORTUNITY.
YOU'LL **TRIPLE** YOUR
MONEY, AND GET THE
PREMIERE JOBS.

STILL NOT
INTERESTED.
I'VE SEEN YOUR
METHODS.

CASE IN
POINT...

WHO'S
THIS...?



BYCATCH FROM A TRAPPER
OFF AN OUTER SYSTEM PLANET.
IT WON'T EAT **ANYTHING** WE GIVE IT.
IT'S TOO **SICKLY** FOR A BUYER AND
PROBABLY **DEAD** TOMORROW.

I'M
FEEDING
IT TO THE
FIRROC.

BUT, **FIRROCS**
ONLY EAT
CAYWYRMS.





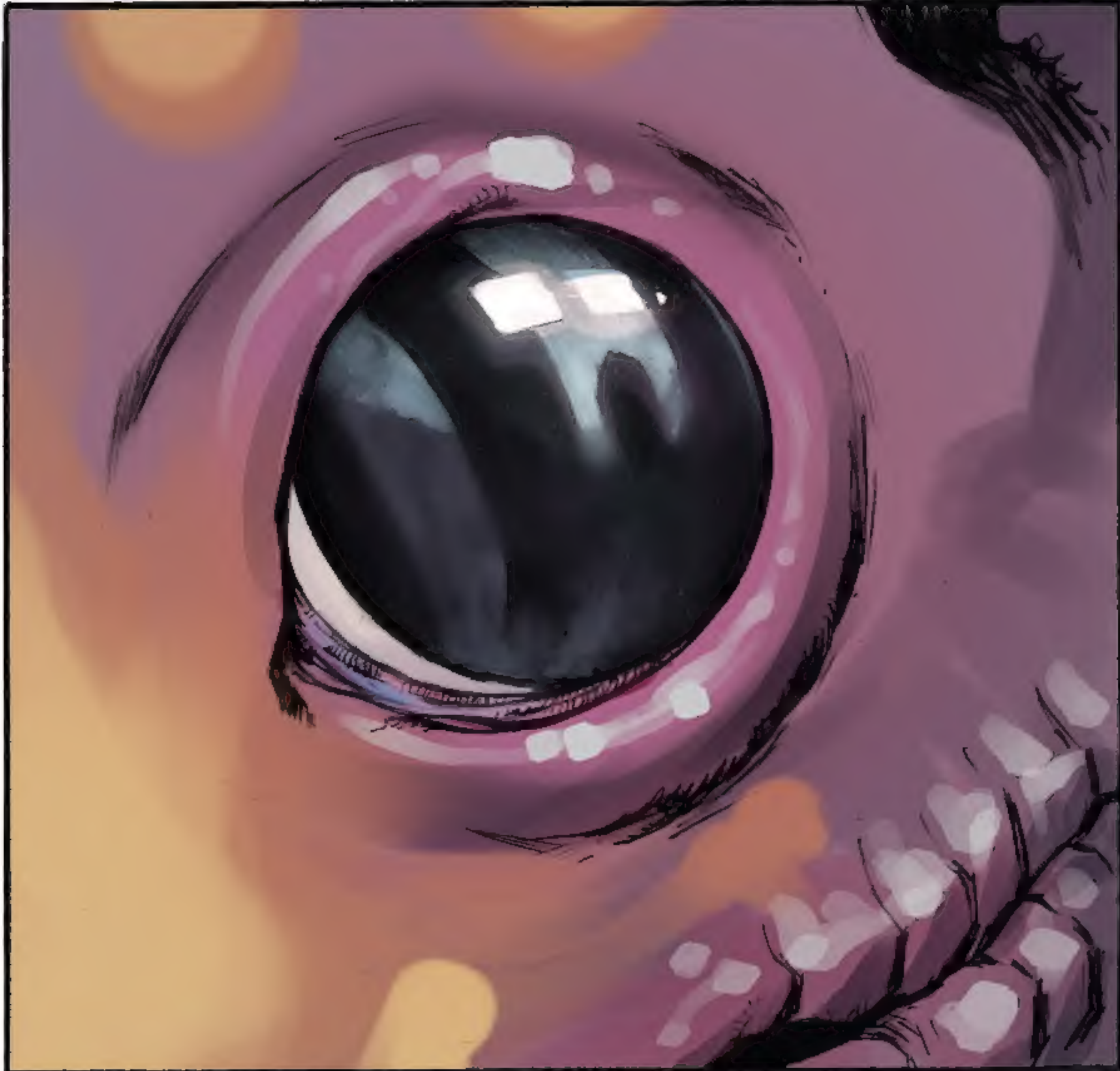
THIS ONE
DOESN'T SEEM
TO CARE.

THE THING'S
RAVENOUS.
IT'S COSTING ME
THOUSANDS TO
KEEP IT IN
PREY.

I'VE STILL
GOT TWO WEEKS
TILL THE CLIENT
GETS IN AND HE
WANTS HER IN
PRIME BREEDING
CONDITION.

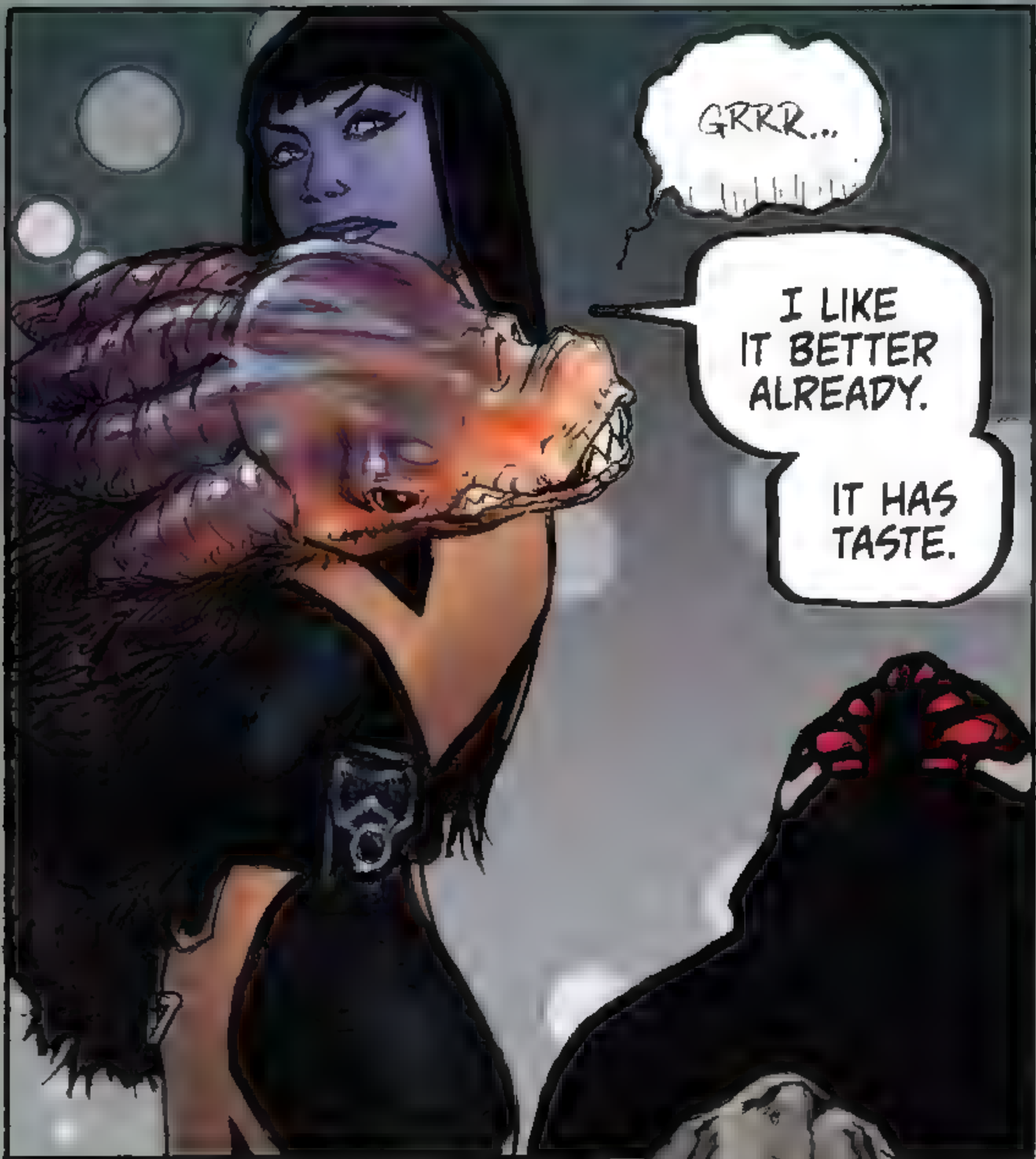


HM.



HELLO
TO YOU
TOO!







THE ZOOT HUNTERS

PETER STEIGERWALD'S

THERE IS LIFE ON OTHER PLANETS.
THEY FIND IT.

BY PETER STEIGERWALD
THE HUNT IS ON.

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FIND OUT
HOW
ALIEN
THE UNIVERSE CAN GET



THE ZOOHUNTERS

PETER STEIGERWALD'S

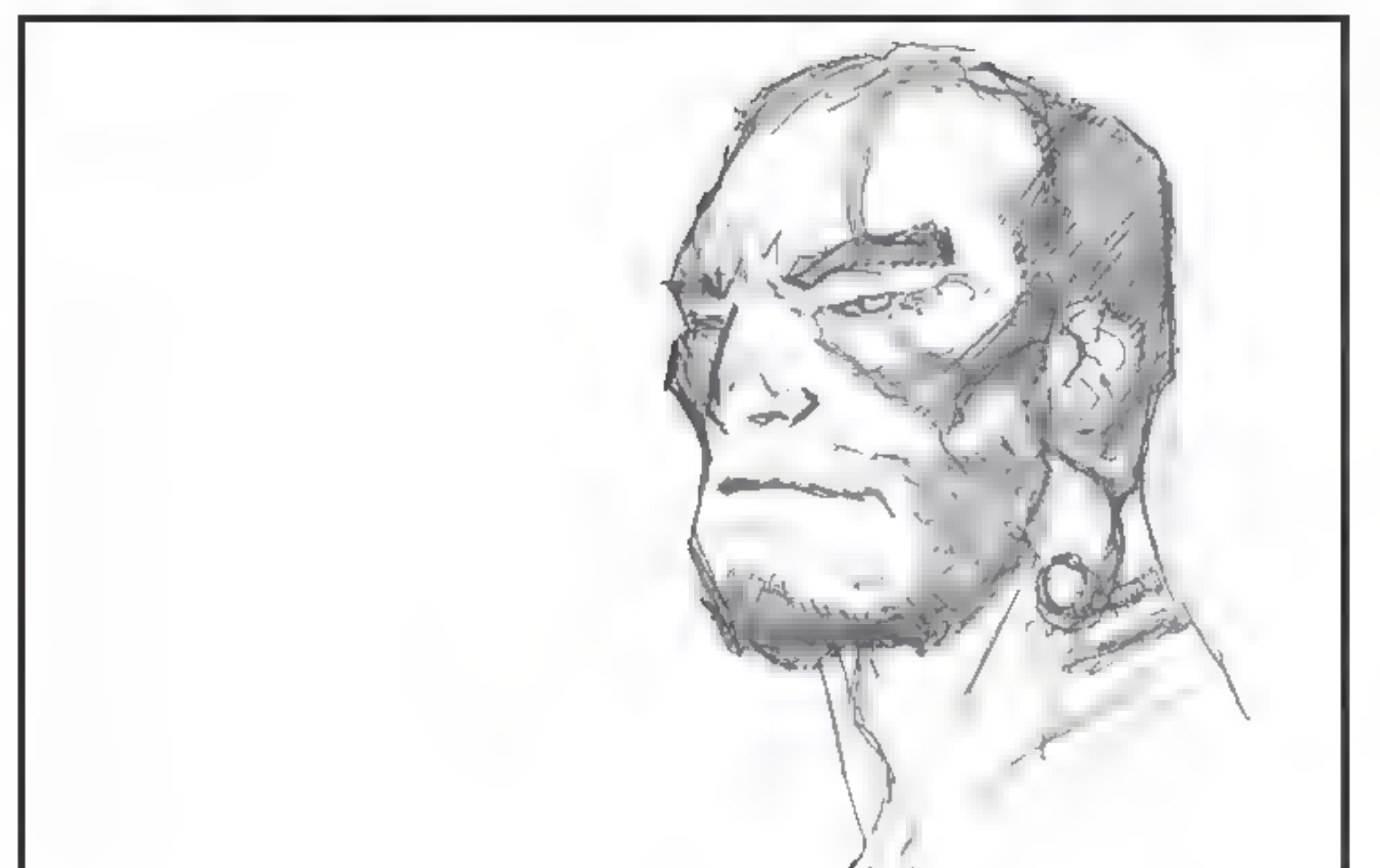
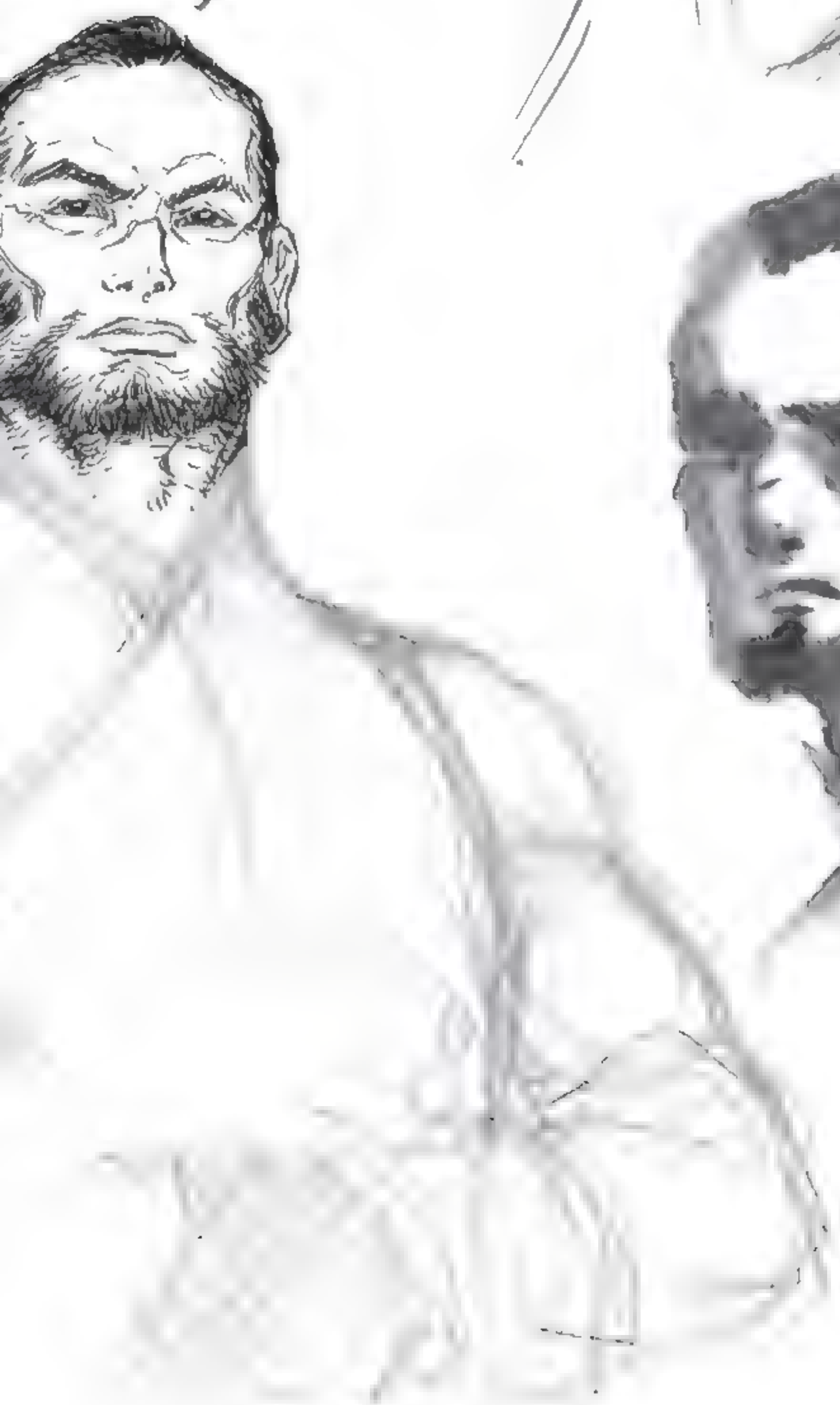
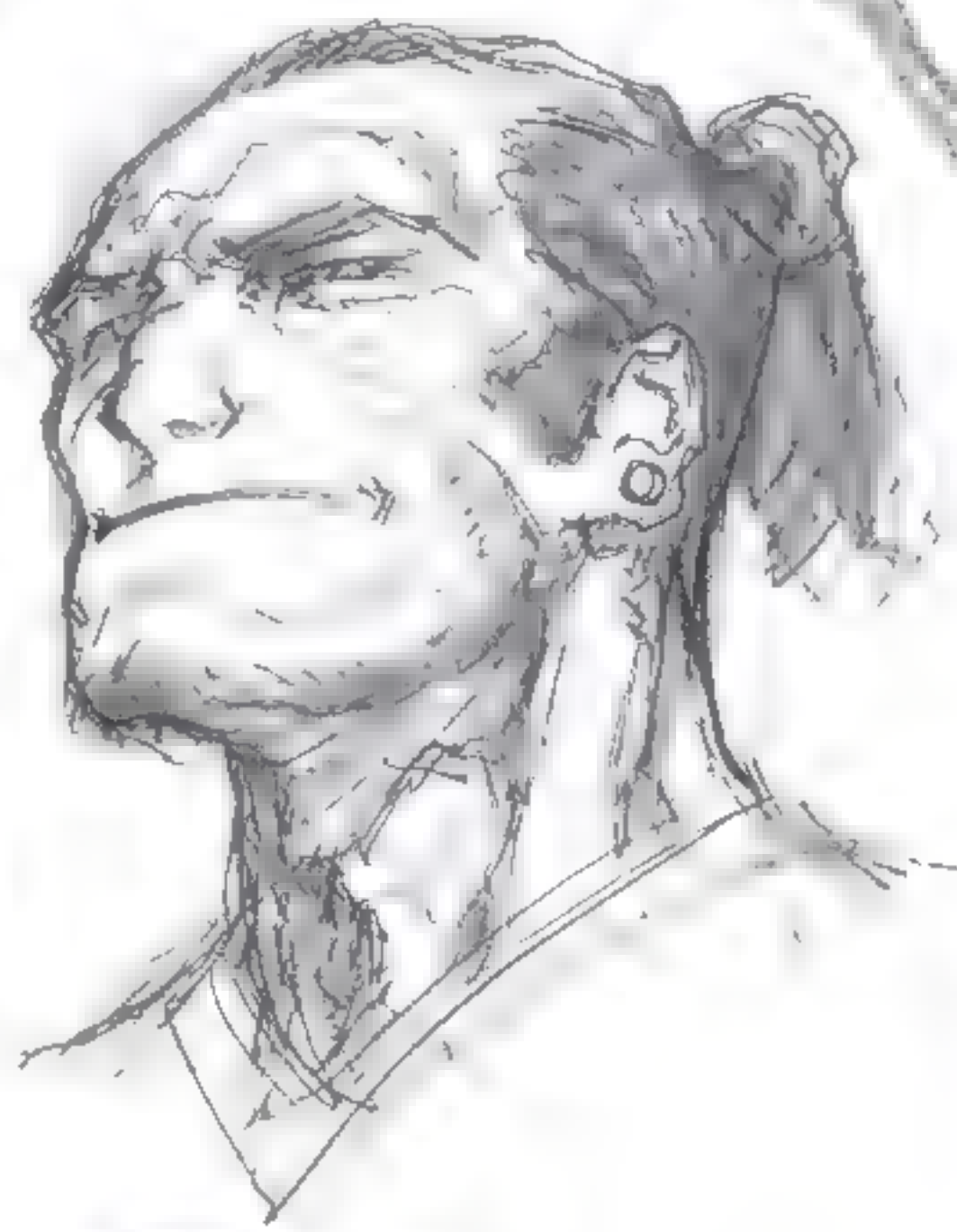
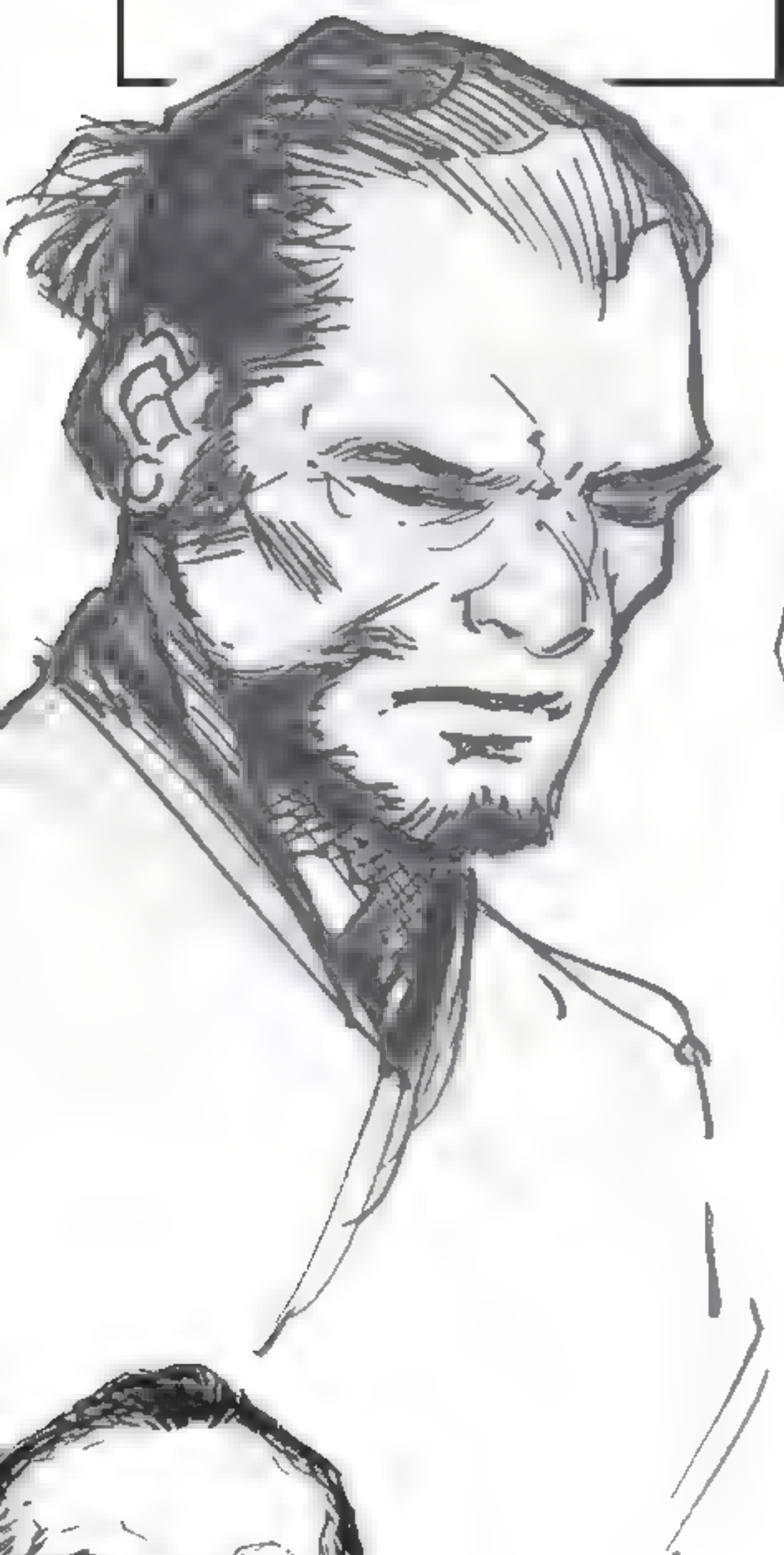
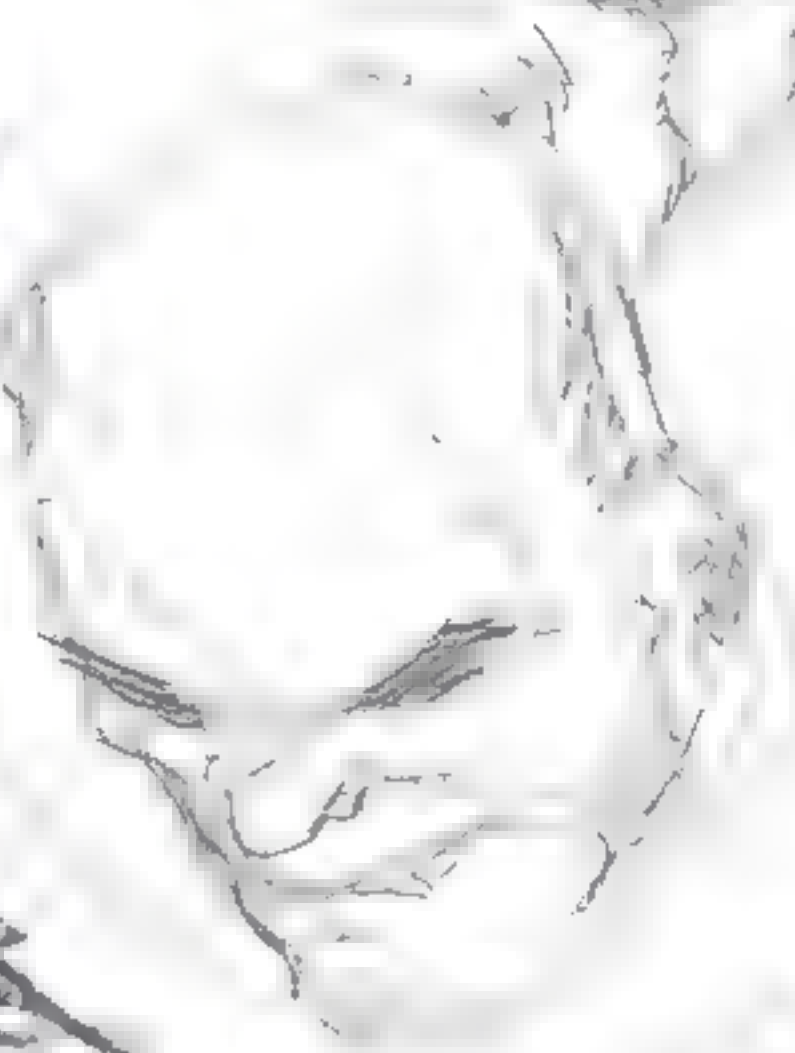
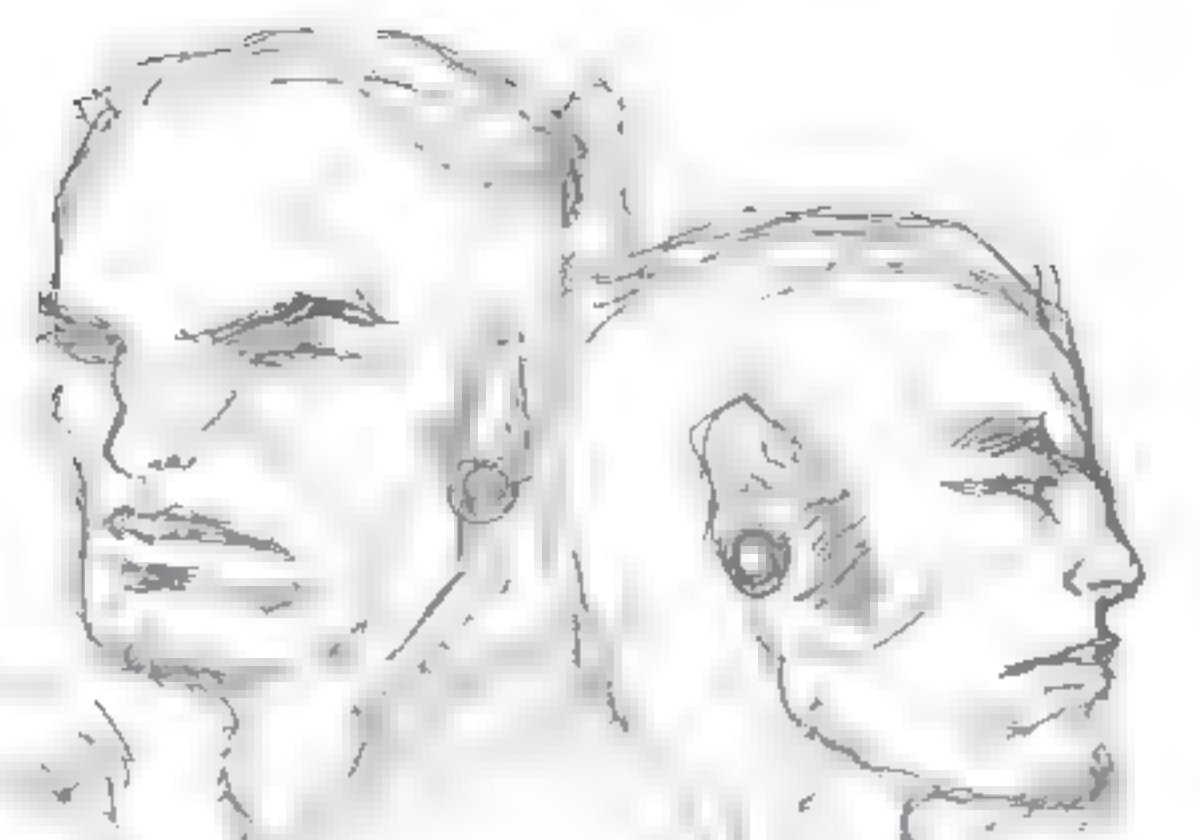
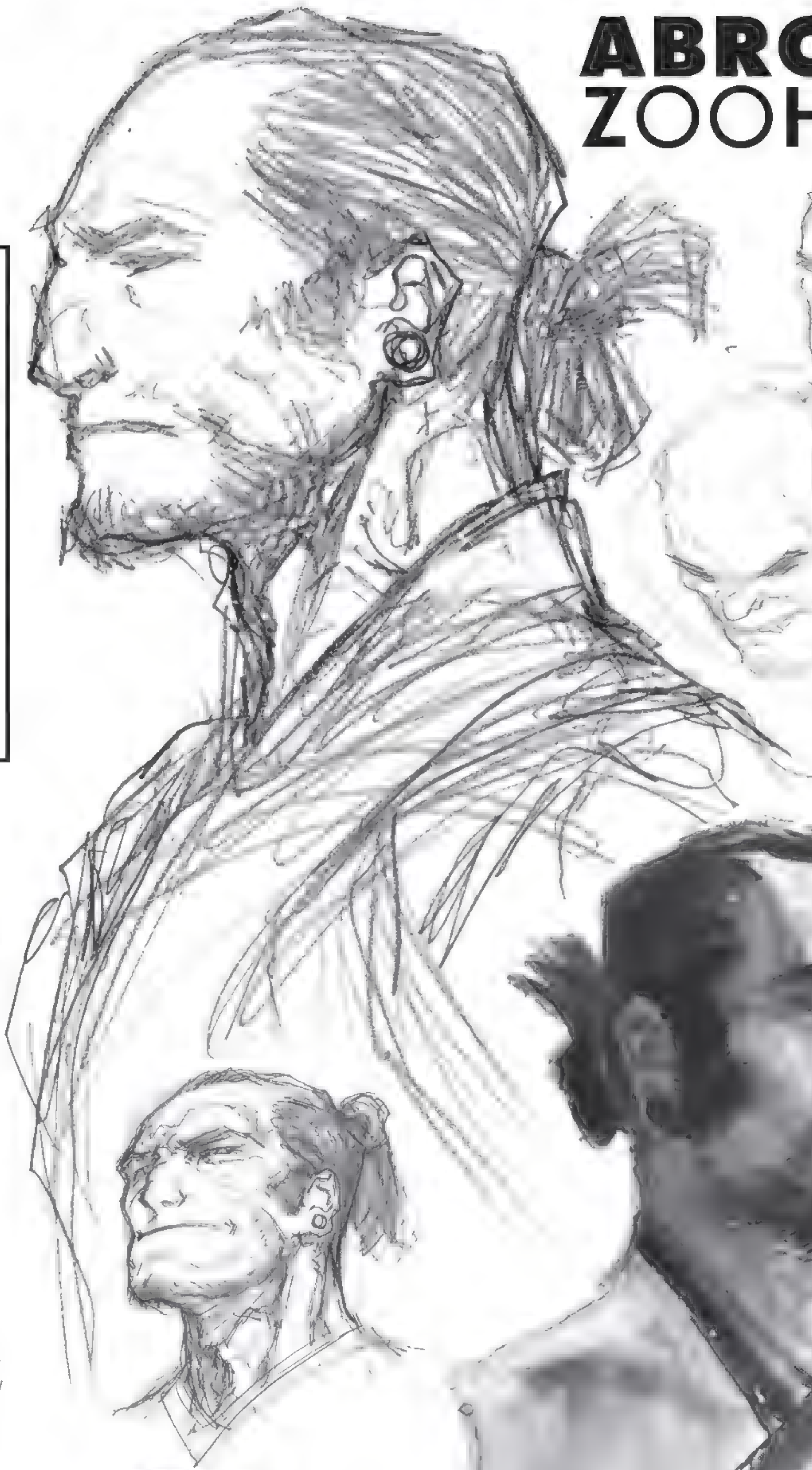
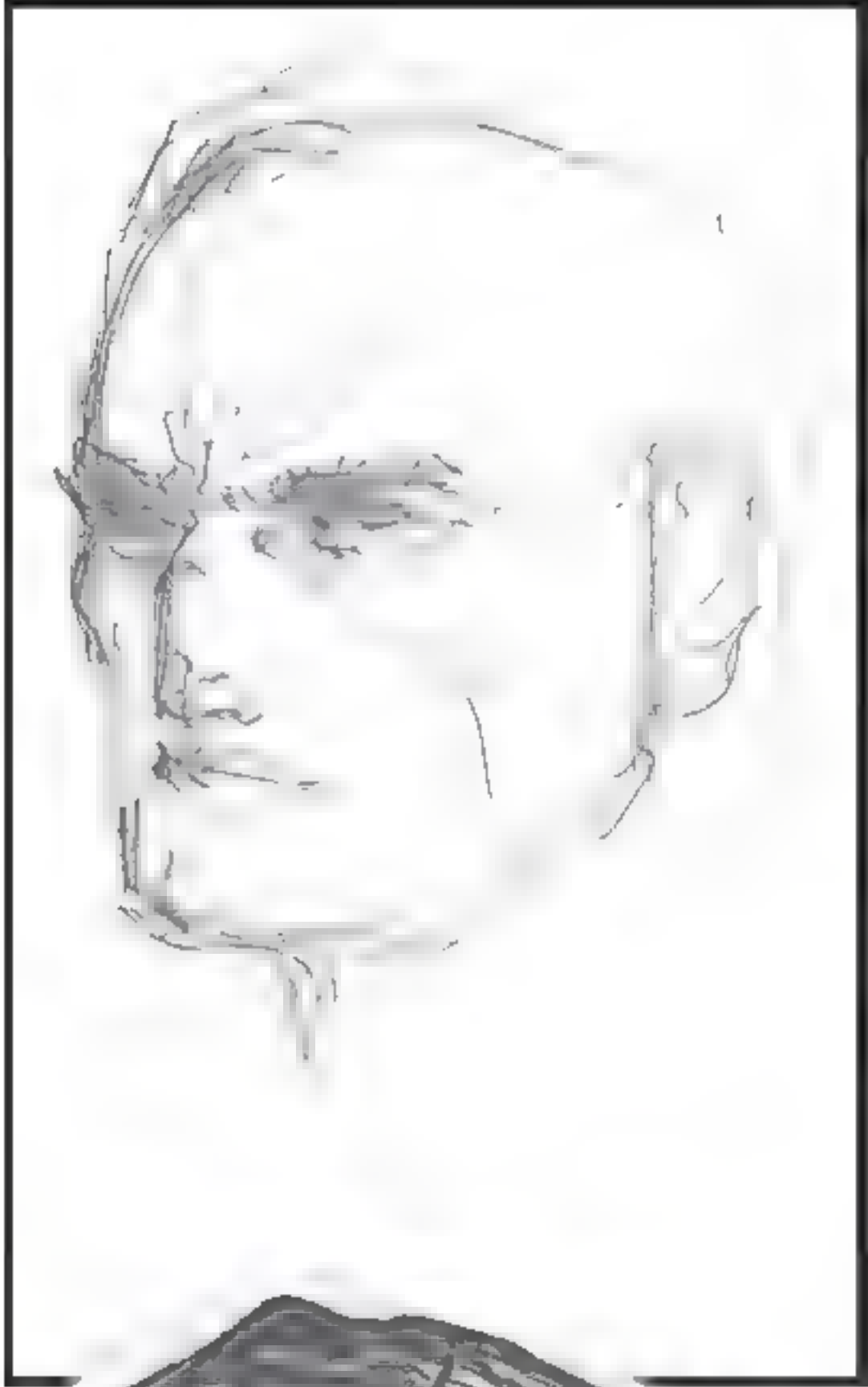
THERE IS LIFE ON OTHER WORLDS...THEY FIND IT.

THE HUNT IS ON.

MOONIVERSE
SKETCHBOOK



ABROS KEL ZOOHUNTER

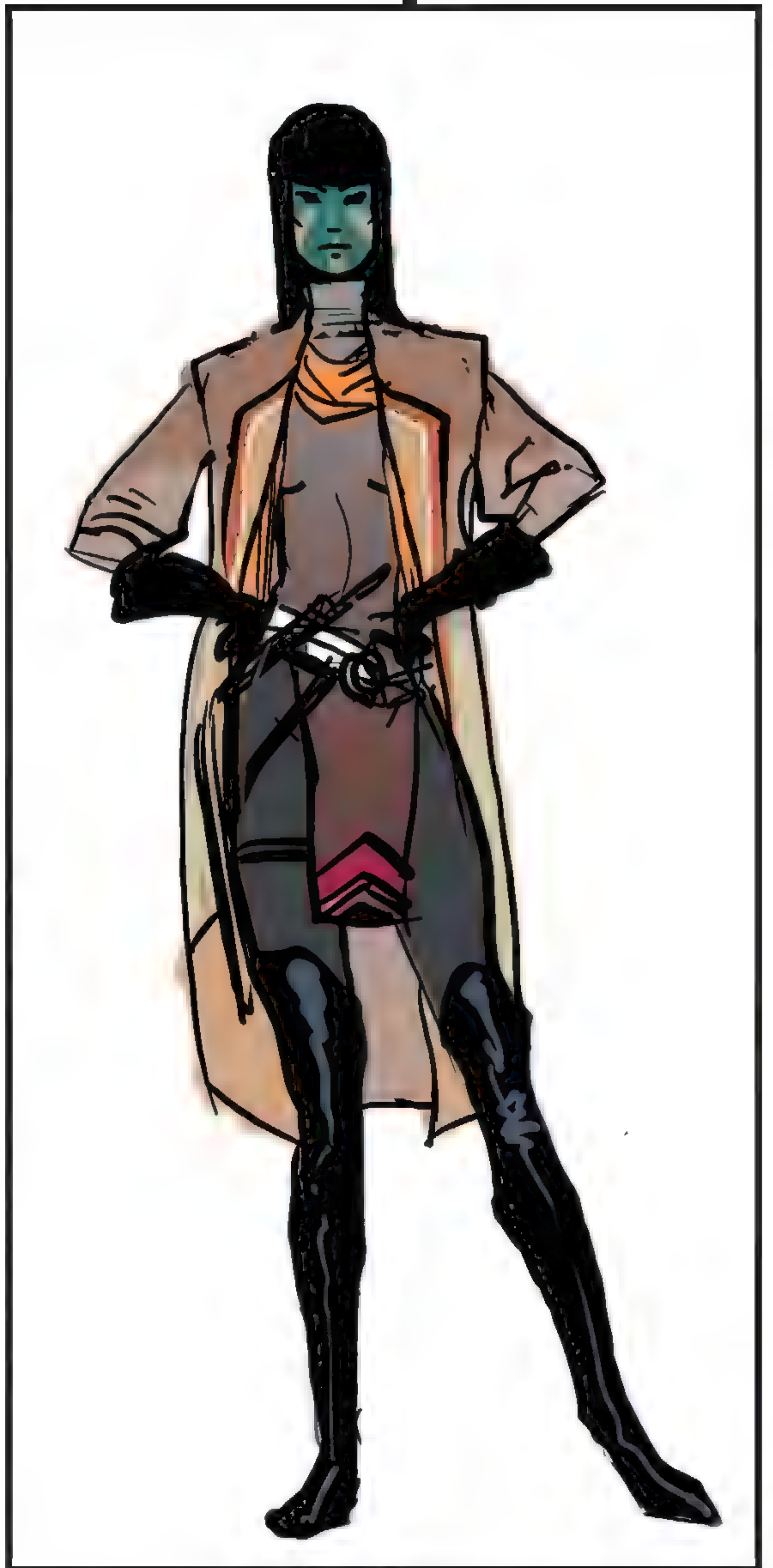










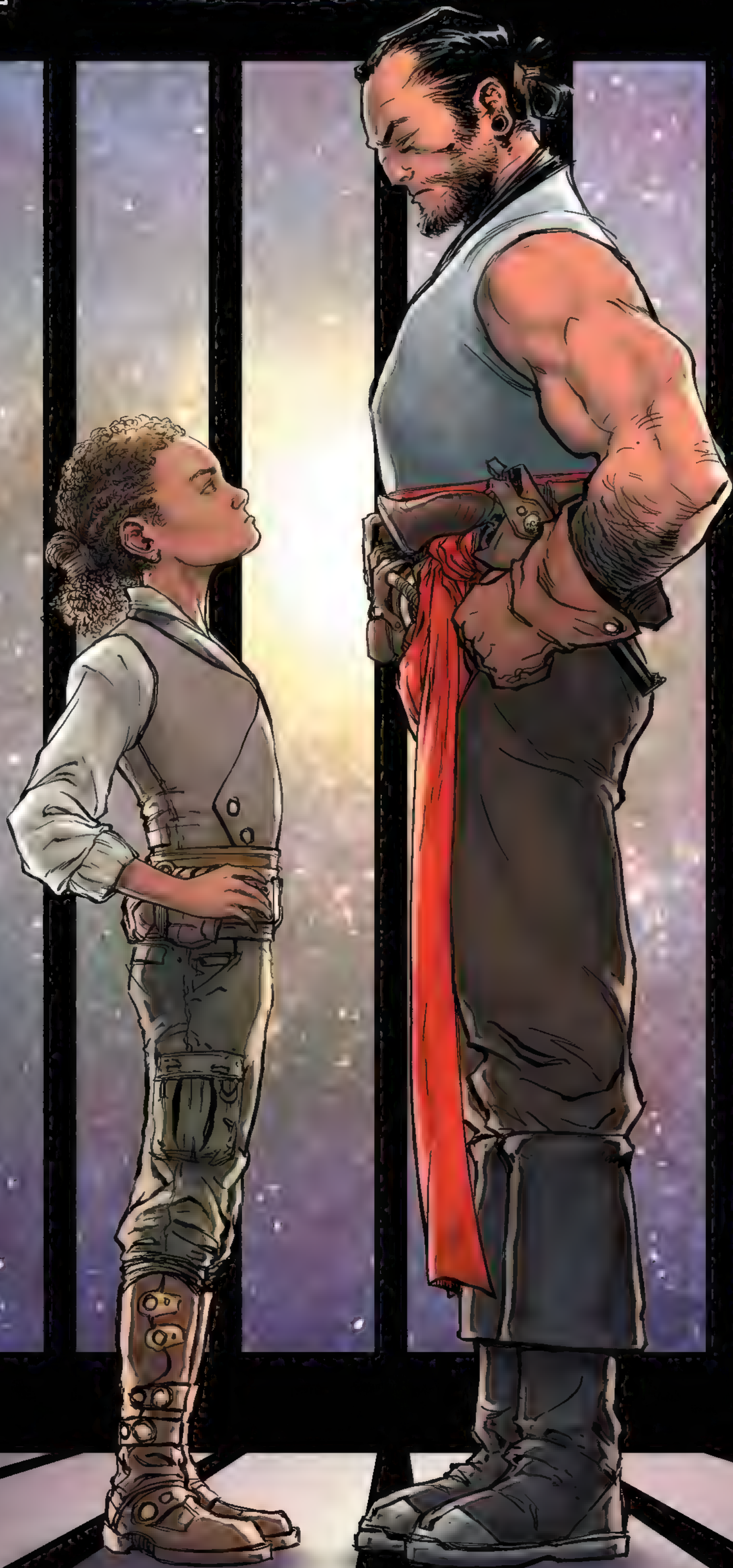


THE ZOOHUNTERS

PETER STEIGERWALD'S

#1
OF 6

ASPEN
COVER A





THE

PETER STEIGERWALD'S

ZOOHUNTERS

#1
OF 6



THE ZOOHUNTERS

PETER STEIGERWALD'S



THE ZOOHUNTERS

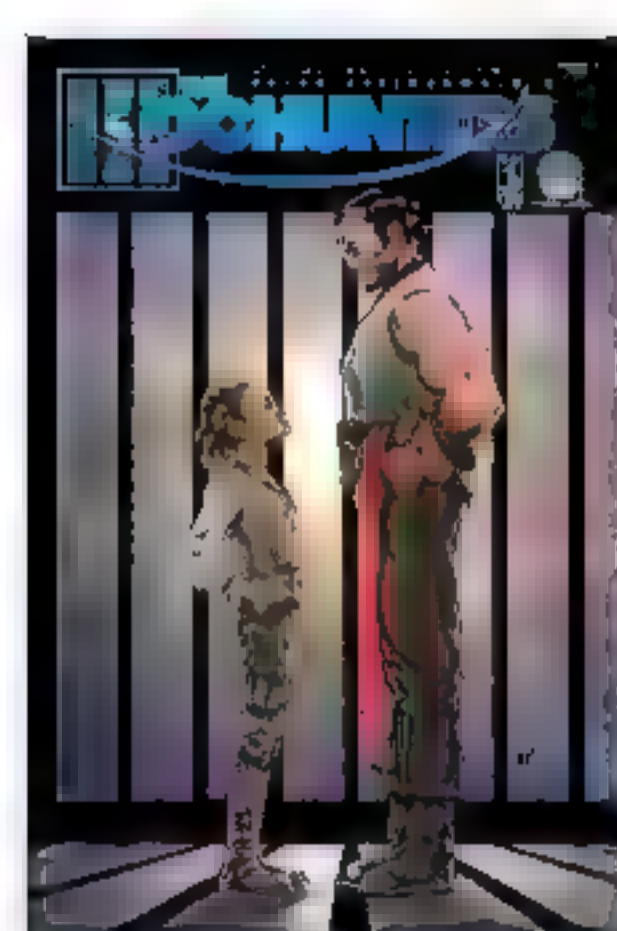
ISSUE ONE

"ADAGIO FOR HER KELS"

story & art PETER STEIGERWALD

journal font by JOSH REED
editors VINCE HERNANDEZ
& FRANK MASTROMAURO

For my mother—
who took me to zoos and taught me art...
—and who never got to see this.



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by - Peter Steigerwald



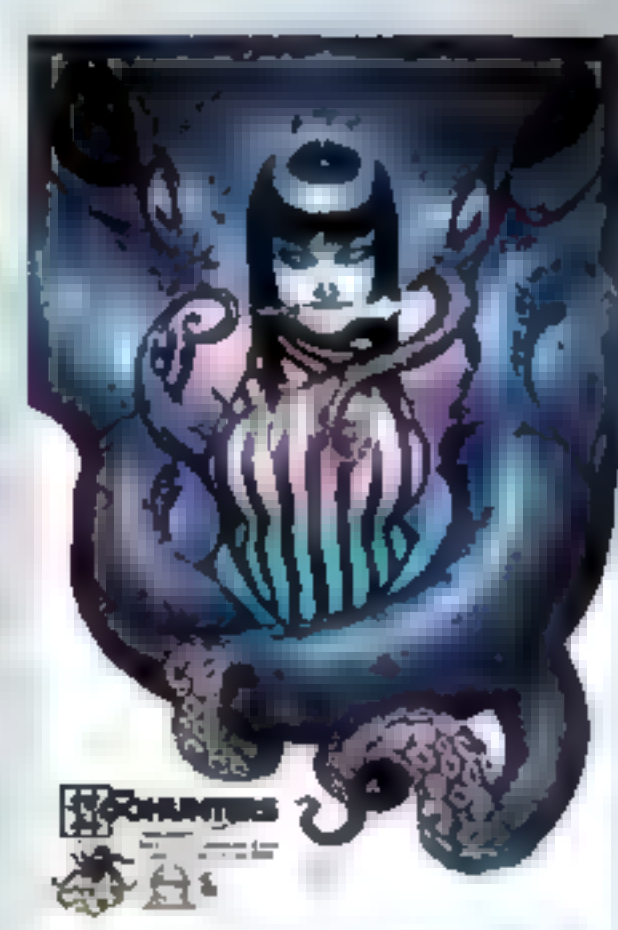
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Dear Mom—
Dad's coming today.
I hope he has news of you.

I miss you.

I WANT TO BE SURE
YOU UNDERSTAND MEA KEL,
HE'LL BE A BIT-- TANGLED. WITH THE
SEVERITY AND LENGTH OF EXTENDED
QUARANTINES, PATIENTS SOMETIMES
BEGIN TO SHUT DOWN FROM THE
ISOLATION--

PSYCHOLOGICALLY
...EMOTIONALLY.

I miss him too, I guess.
I wish you were coming with him.

WE HAVEN'T TOLD HIM THE NEWS YET.
OBVIOUSLY HE KNOWS SHE WAS VERY
ILL, BUT EVEN GIVEN THAT HIS RELEASE IS
TODAY, WE THOUGHT IT BEST IT COME
FROM A FAMILY MEMBER.

HE'S BEEN ENCOURAGED TO KEEP
A JOURNAL--TO WRITE, LETTERS,
AS IT WERE, TO HER. IT'S A WAY
OF COMMUNICATING HIS FEELINGS
AND COPING WITH THE LONELINESS
OF QUARANTINE.



I ALREADY
WENT OVER
THIS WITH YOUR
COUNSELOR...



..AND AS I TOLD HER,
IT'S BEEN FOUR MONTHS.
THAT'S A LONG TIME TO
NOT KNOW THE TRUTH.

TY'S SMART.
HE'LL COPE.

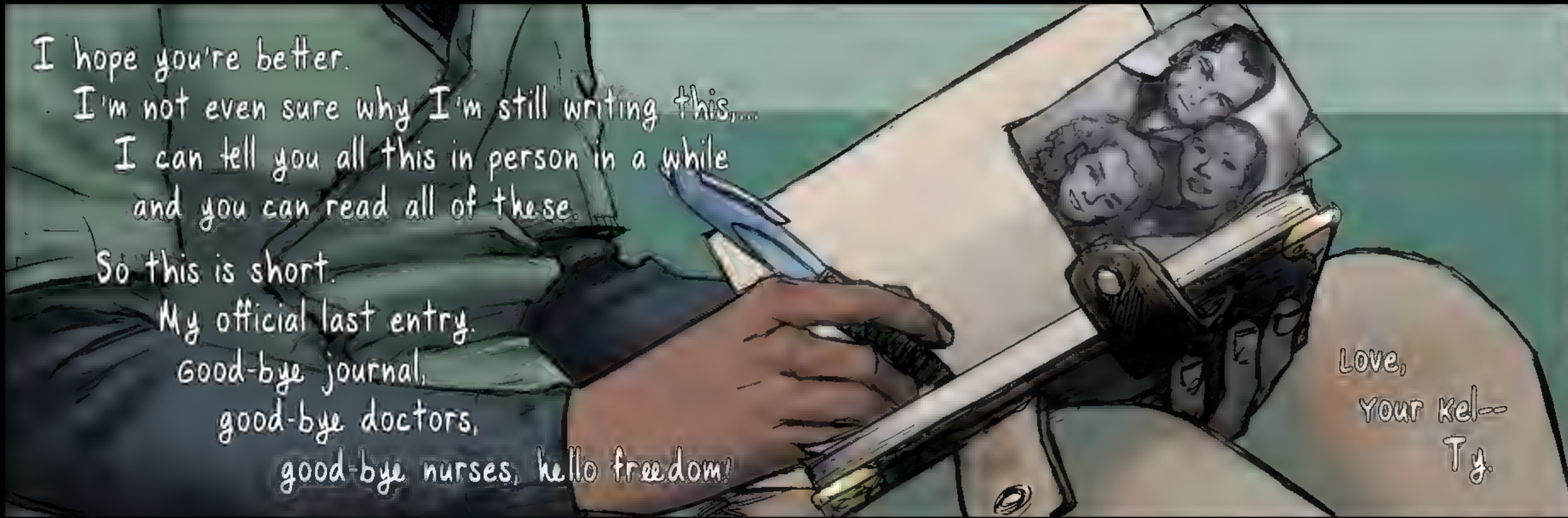
TO NOT TELL HIM,
THAT'S NOT RIGHT.
YOU *DON'T* DO THAT
TO A MAN.



BUT
HE'S NOT
A MAN.

HE'S JUST A BOY.
HIS MOTHER'S
CONDITION WAS
GRAVE.

HE WAS
GOING INTO
ISOLATION FOR
AN EXTENDED
PERIOD, THE
DEPRESSION
ALONE MIGHT
HAVE--



I hope you're better.
I'm not even sure why I'm still writing this....
I can tell you all this in person in a while
and you can read all of these.

So this is short.
My official last entry.
Good-bye journal,
good-bye doctors,
good-bye nurses, hello freedom!

Love,
Your Kel--
Ty.



HE IS
A MAN.

AND YOU
SHOULD HAVE
TOLD HIM.



...



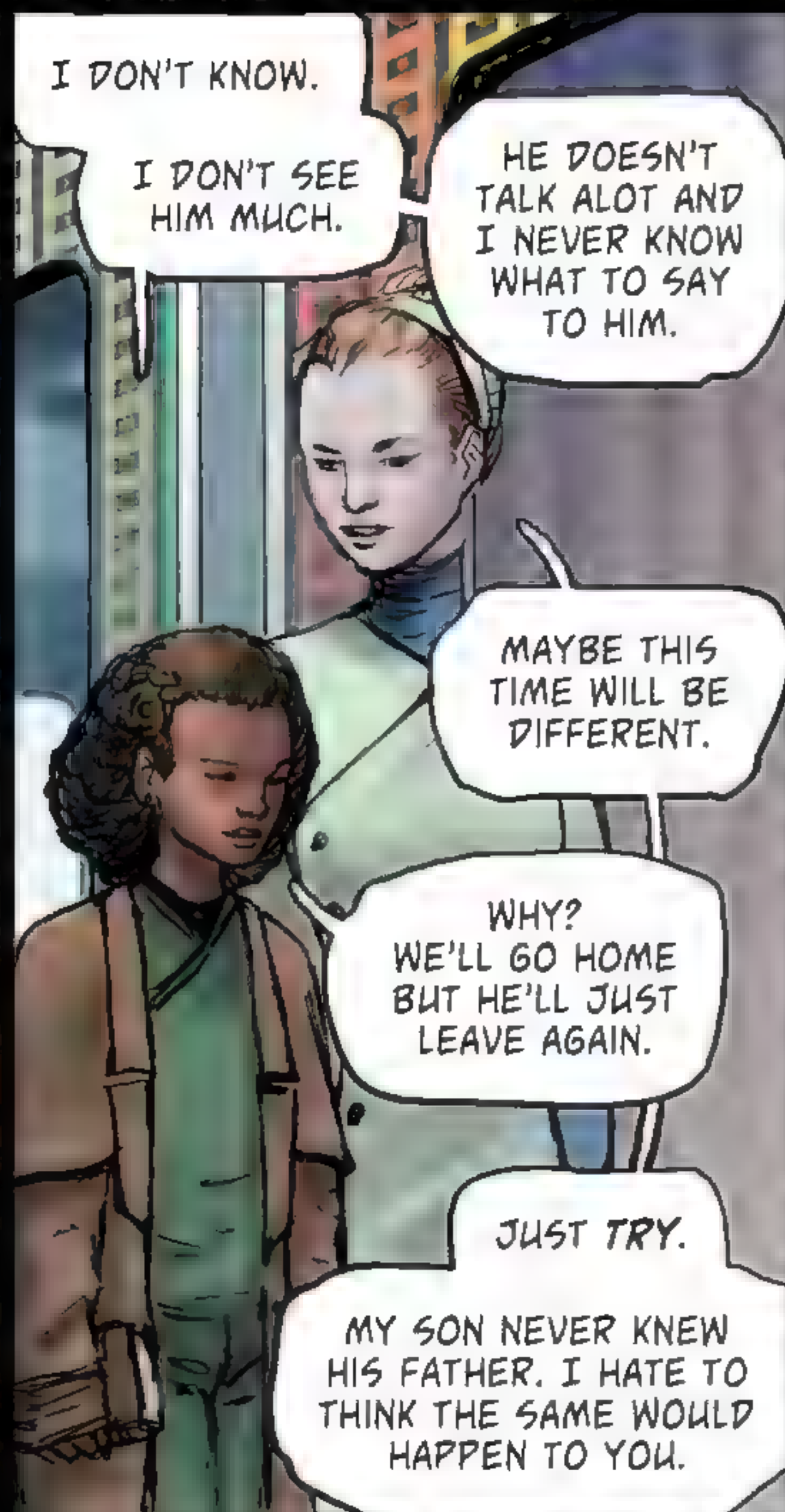
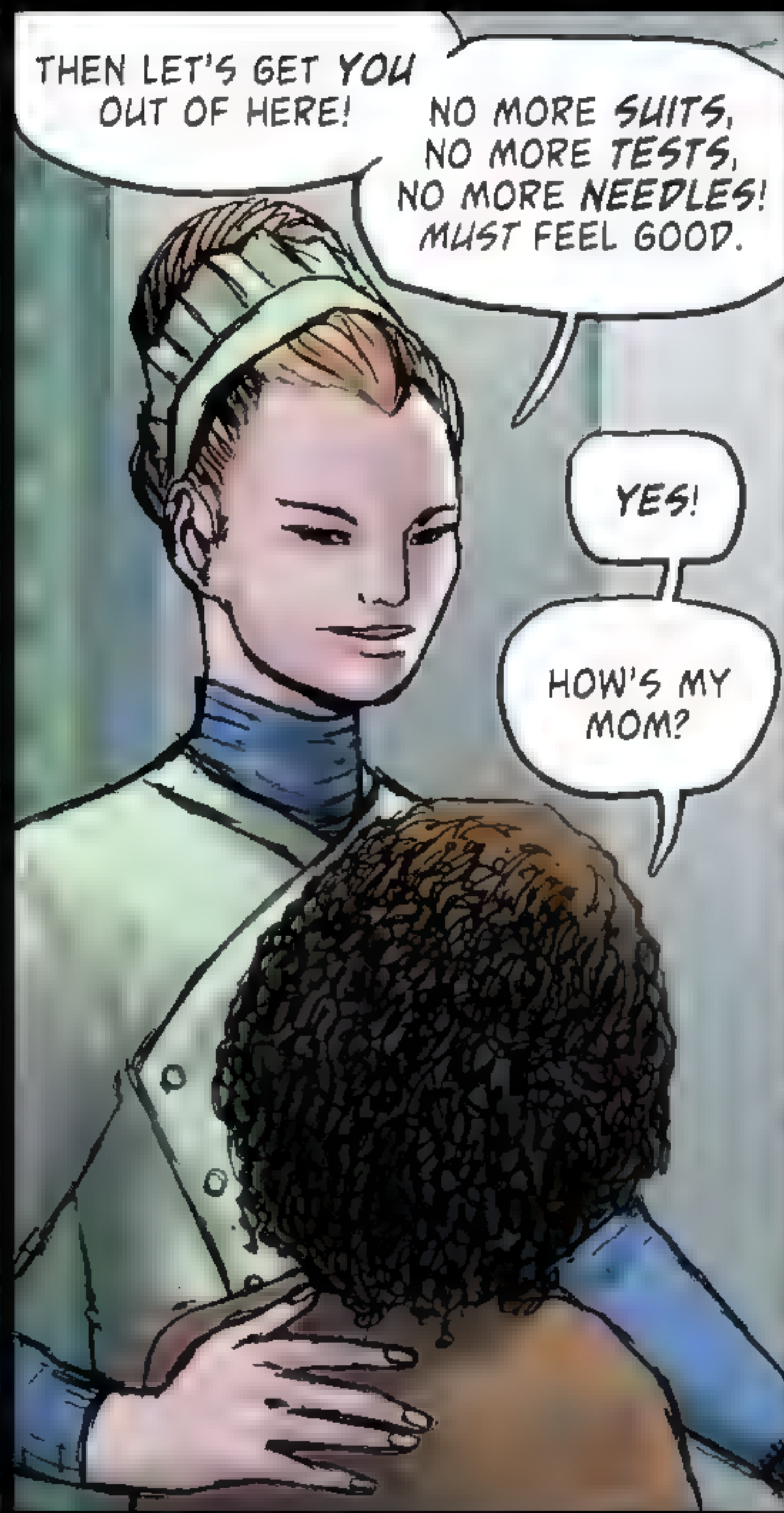
WELL...

-ahem-

--THE NURSE
HAS GONE TO
FETCH HIM.

ENCOURAGE HIM
TO KEEP UP WITH
THE JOURNAL--TO
HELP TRANSITION
BACK TO
NORMALCY.

DON'T PRESS HIM TO READ IT.
THOSE ARE HIS PRIVATE THOUGHTS,
HE'LL BE GRIEVING AND NEED SOME-
PLACE SAFE TO EXPRESS HIMSELF.





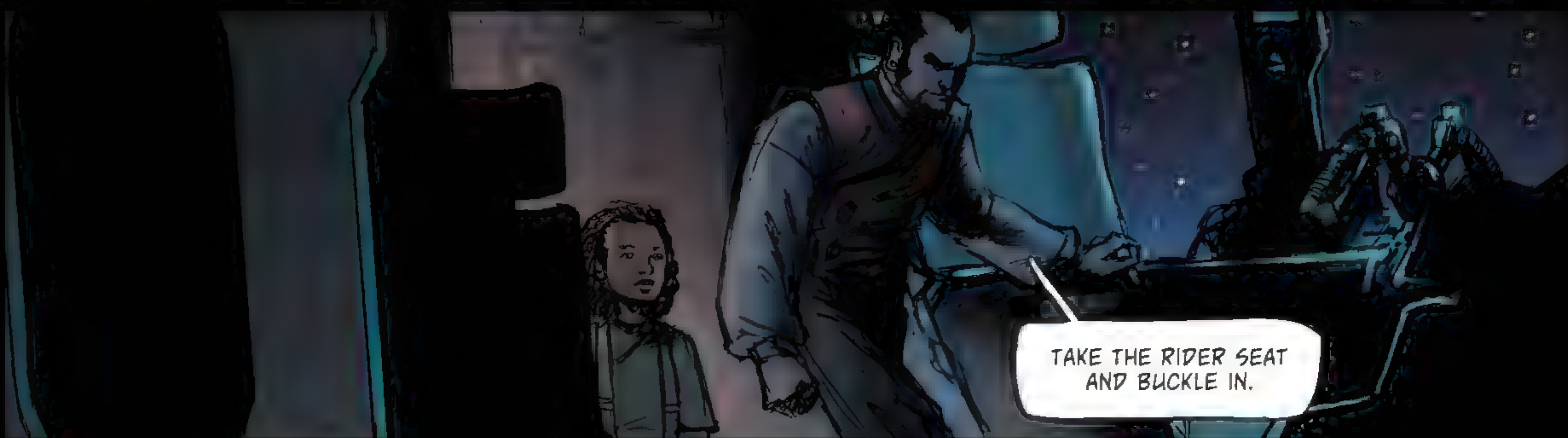
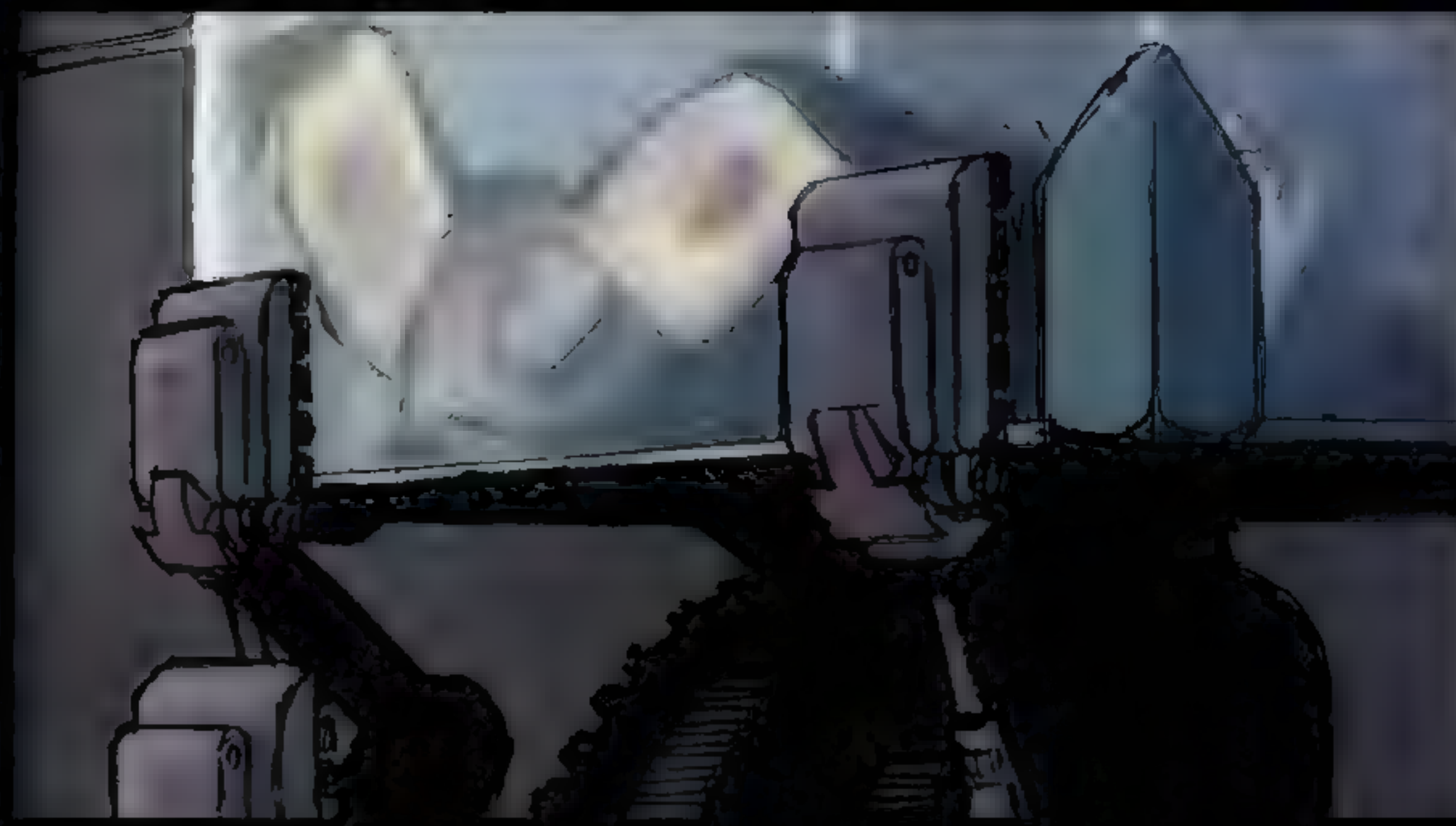
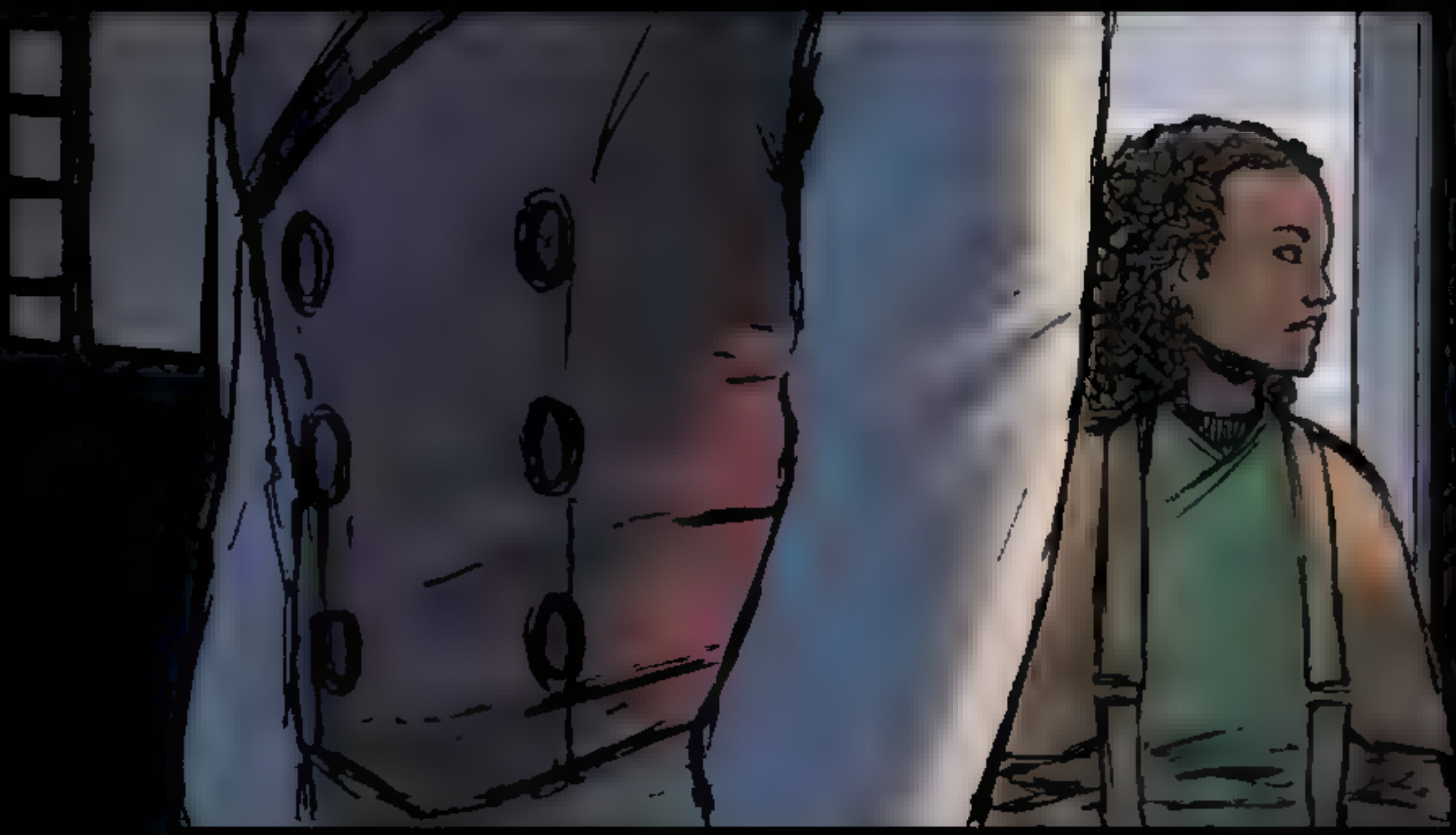


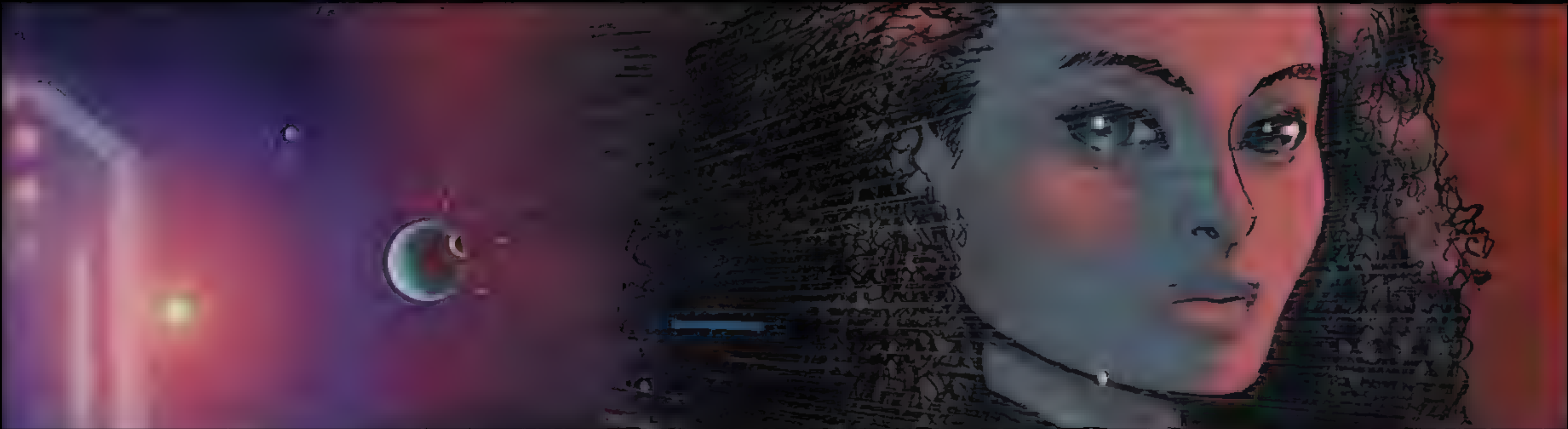
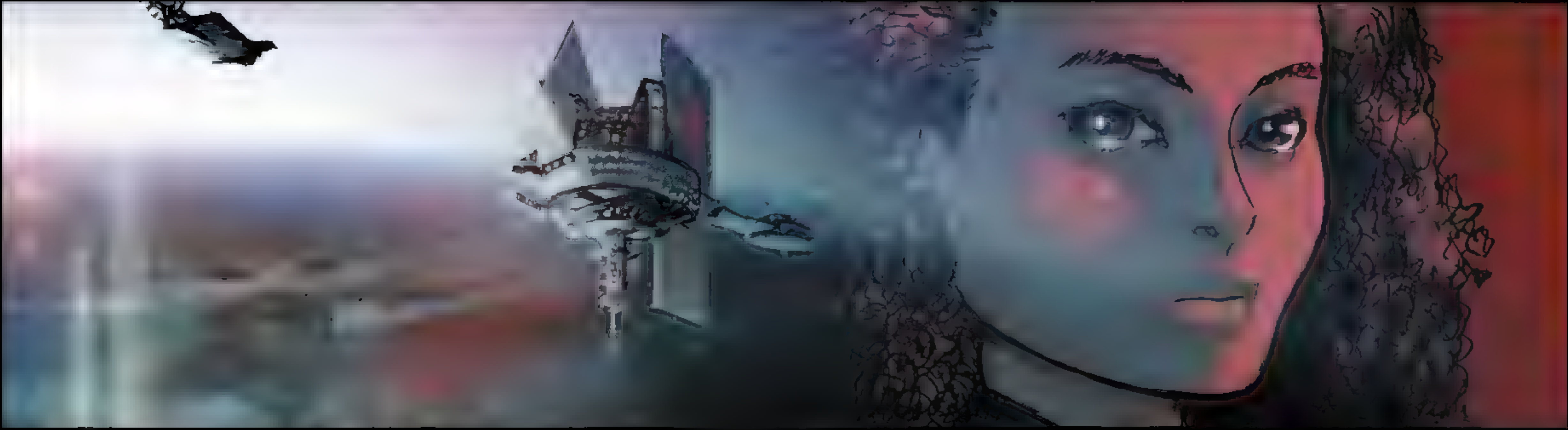


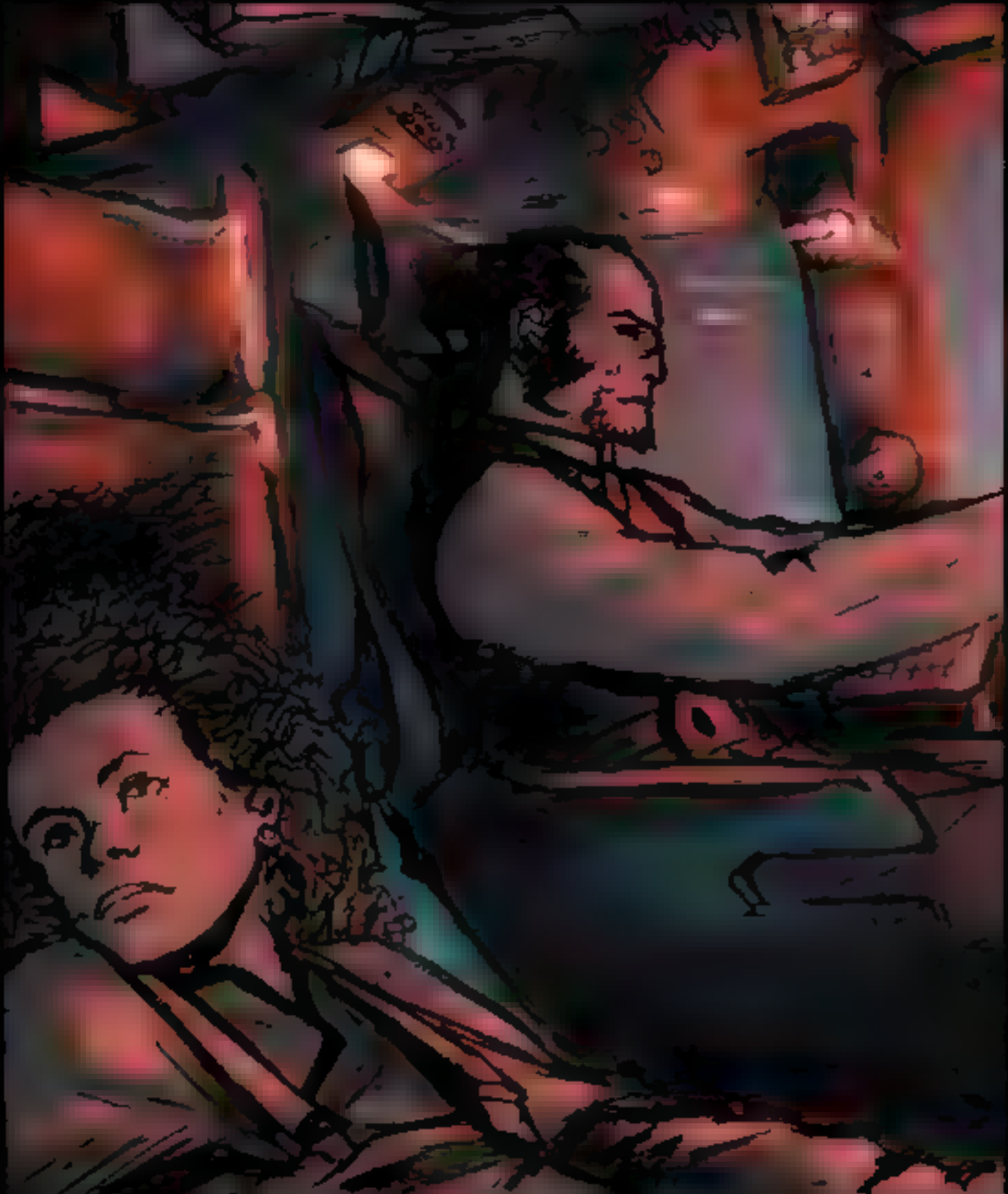
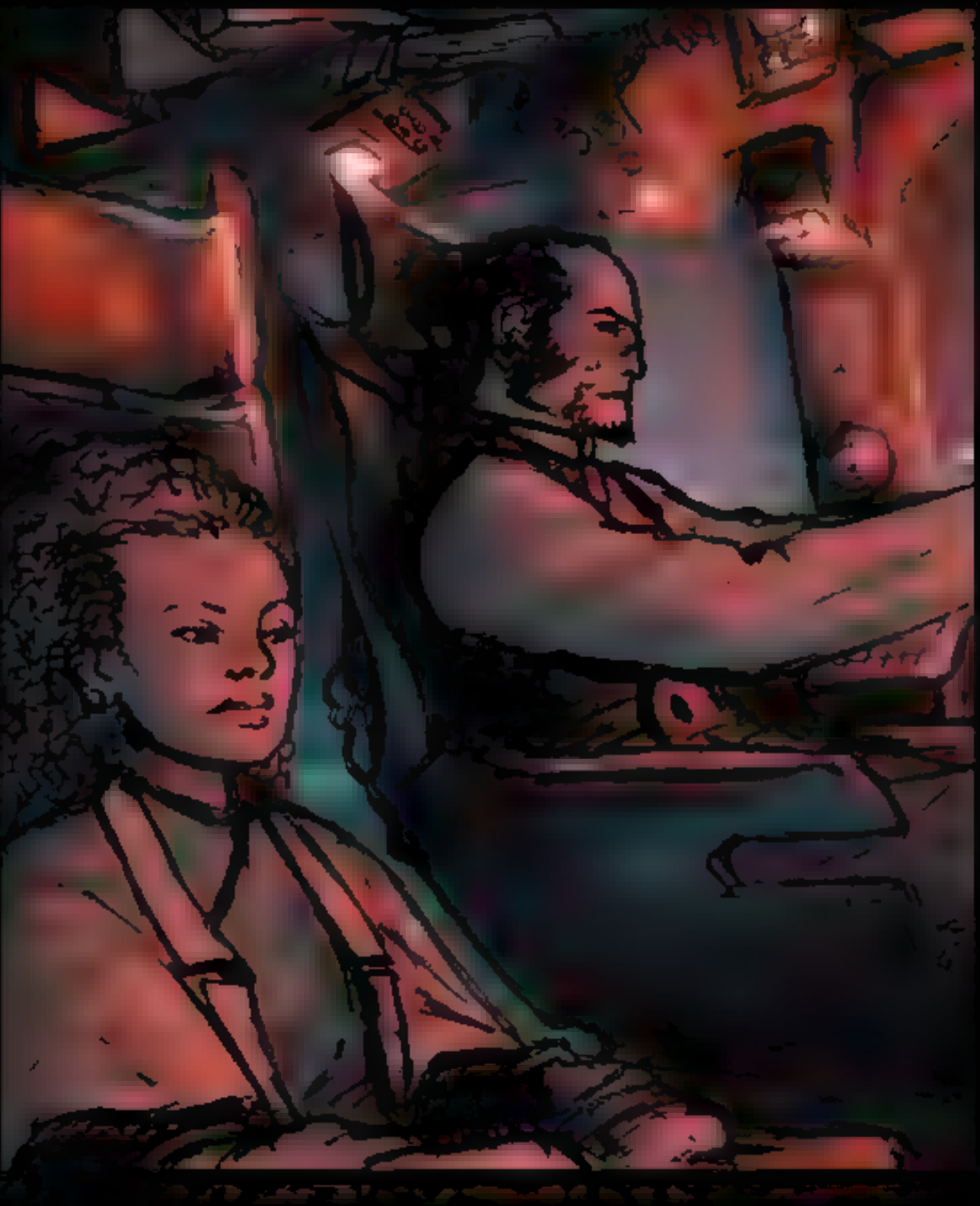
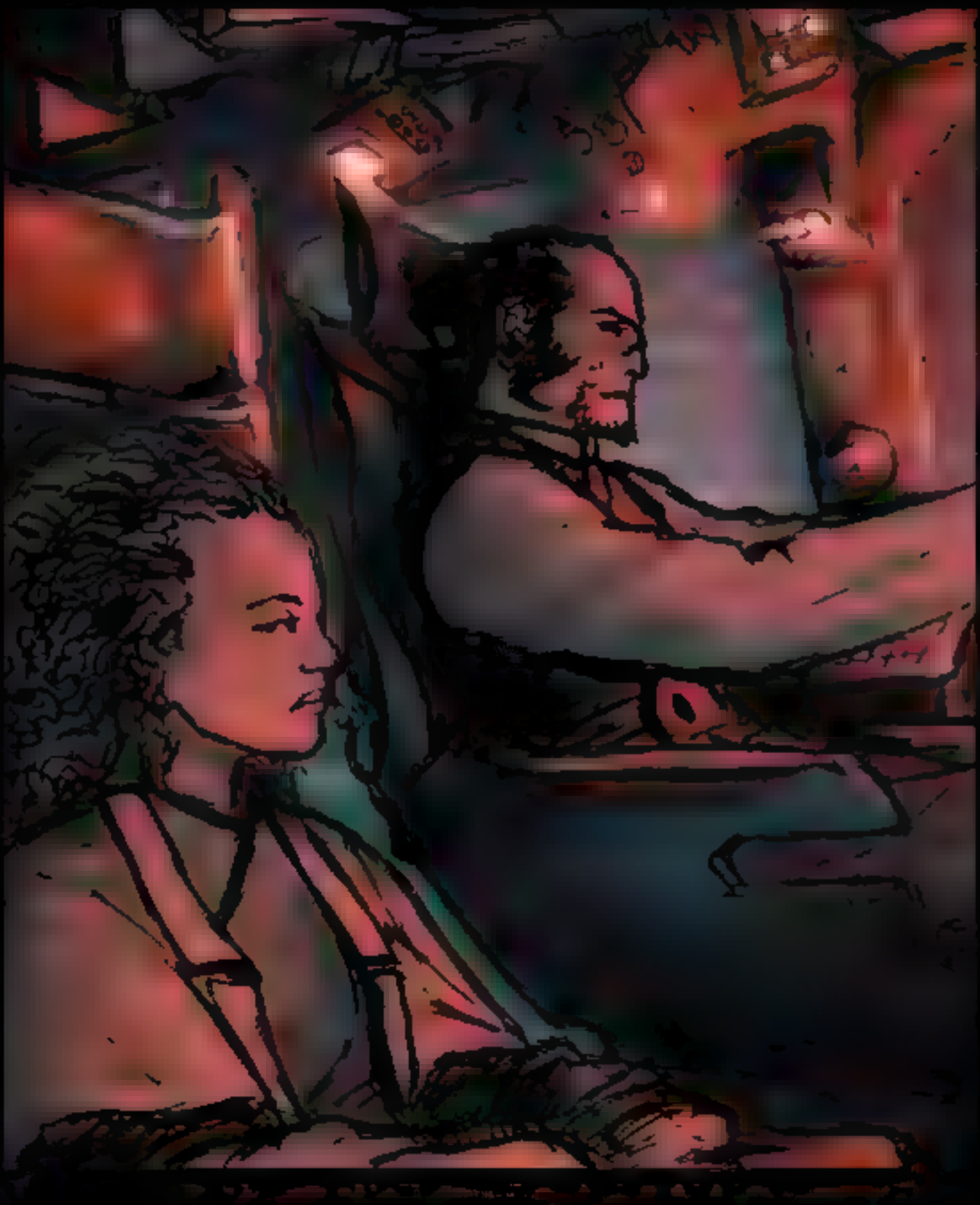
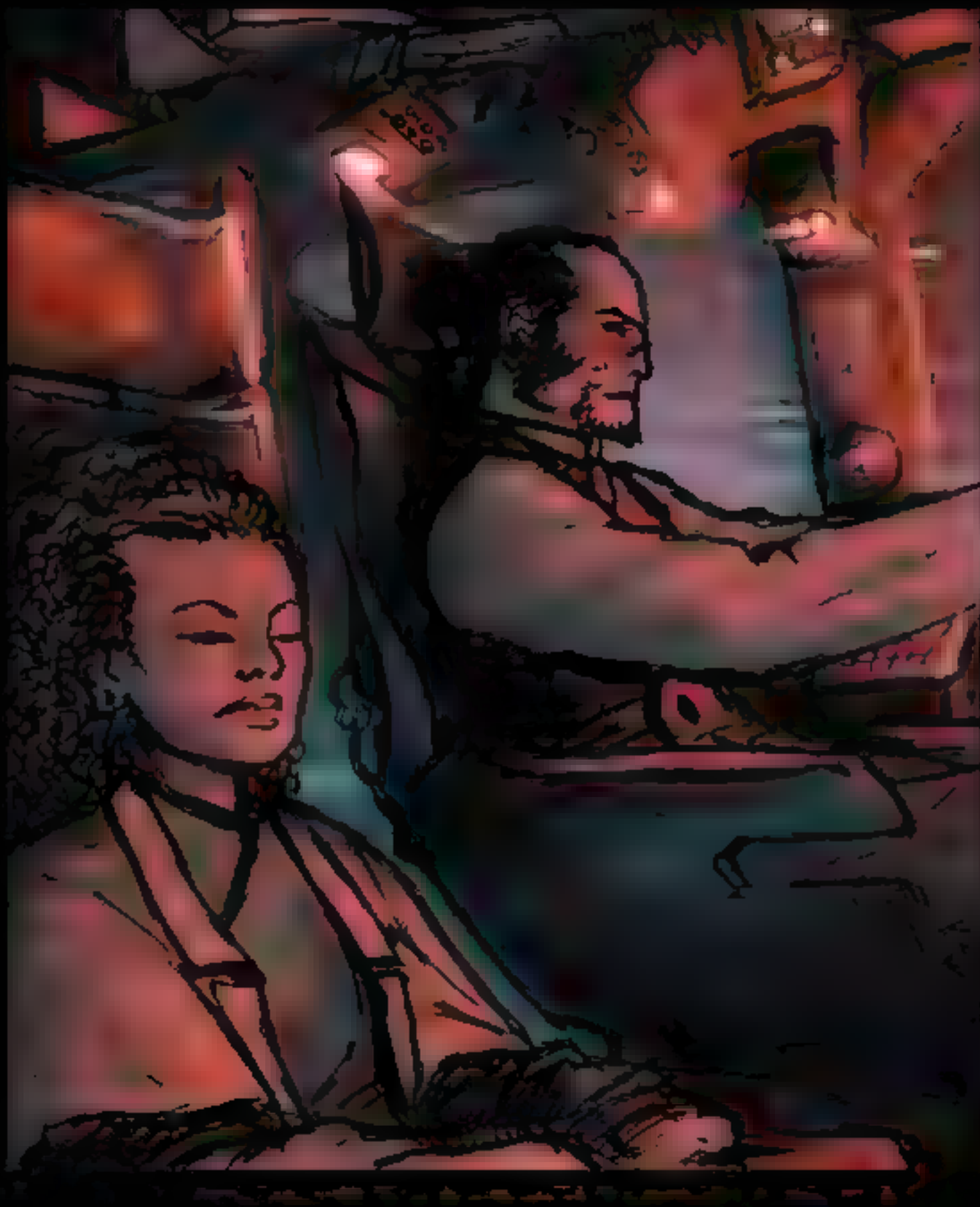
IT'S JUST
US NOW.

JUST US.









YOU GET SICK IF YOU
WATCH THE BLUR TOO
LONG.



I'M ALRIGHT.
I WAS LITTLE
THEN.



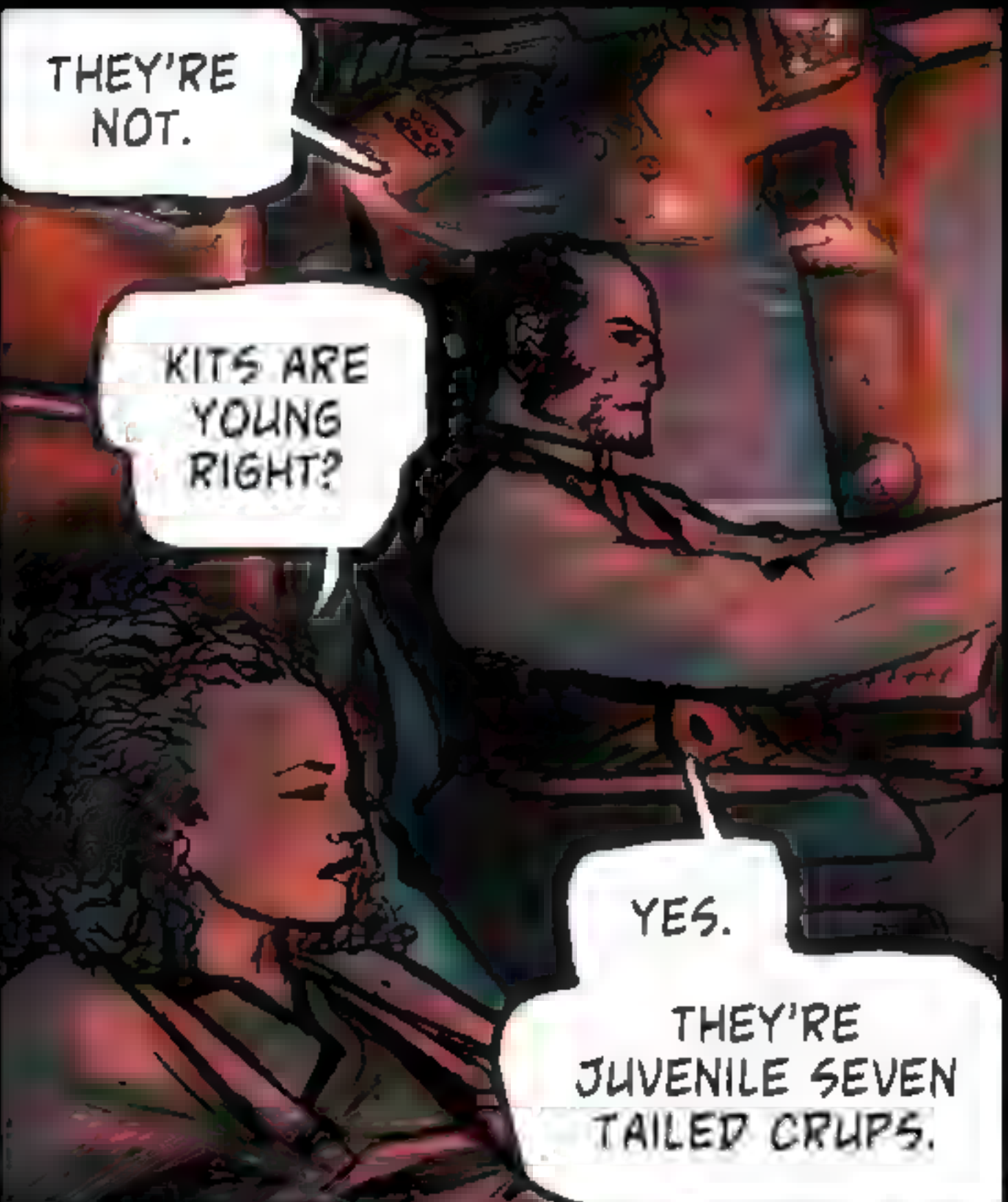
WHERE ARE
WE GOING?



NAMOSI.

TO DELIVER
THOSE KITS.

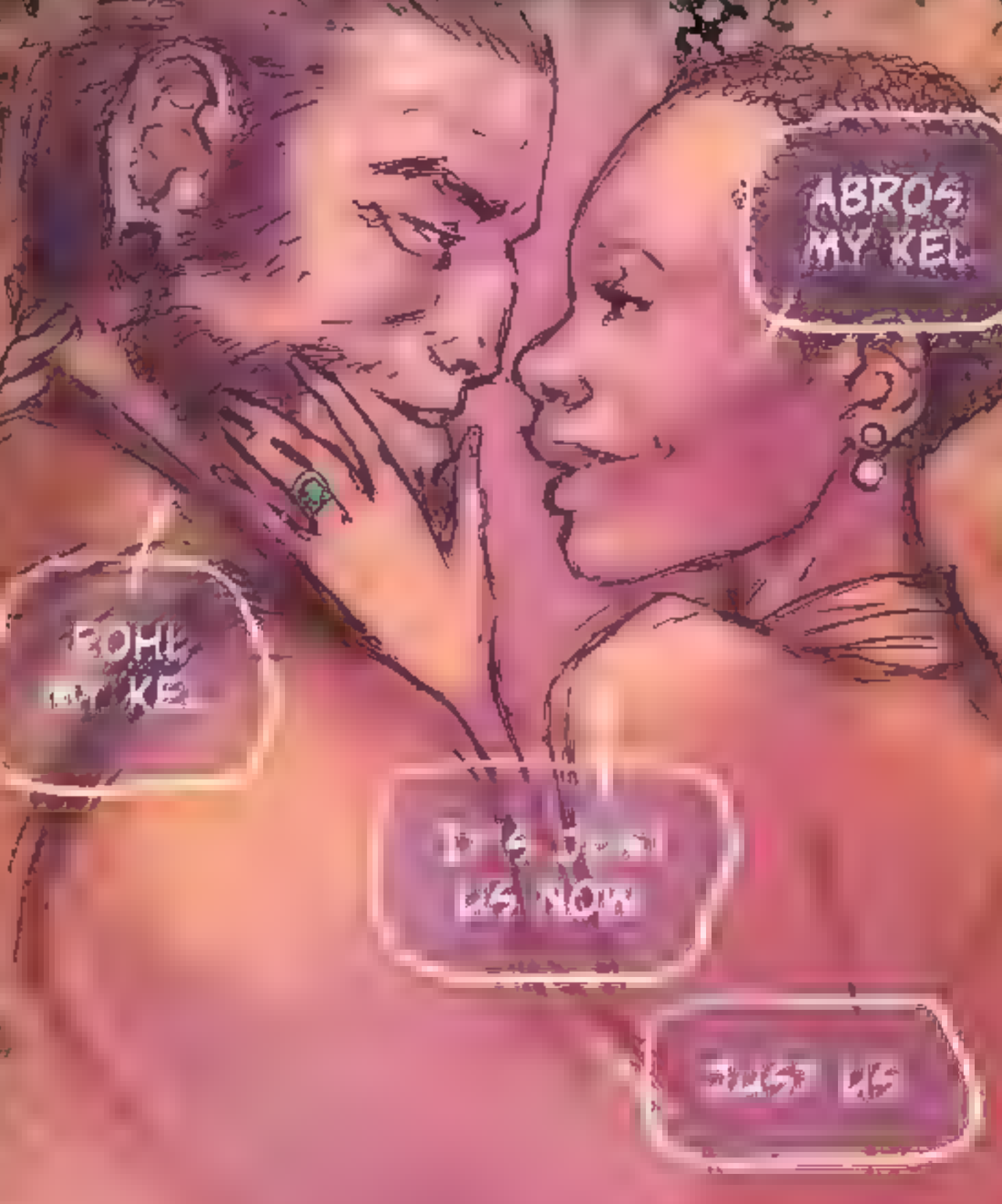
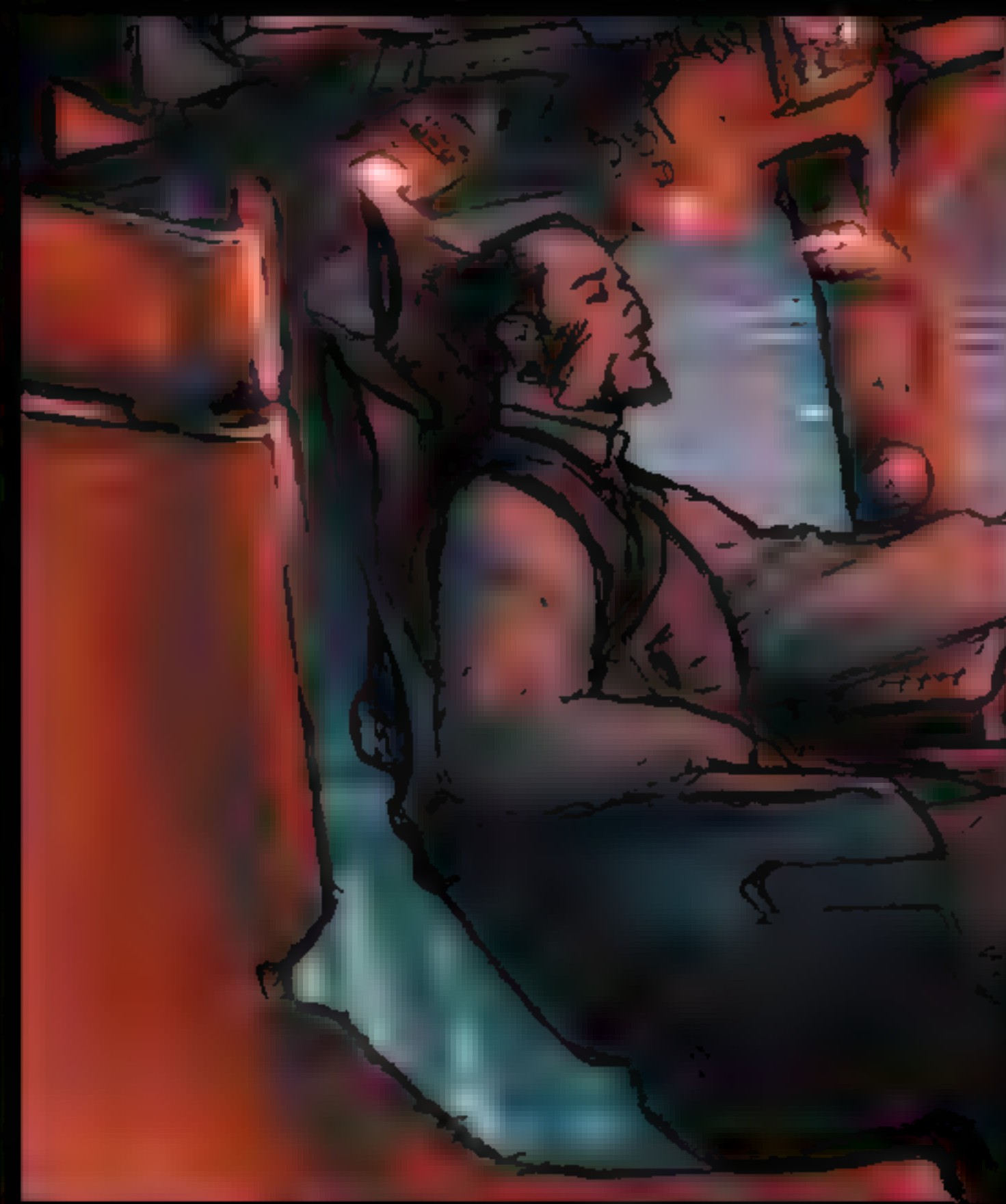
THEY
LOOKED
SAD.



THEY'RE
NOT.

KITS ARE
YOUNG
RIGHT?

YES.
THEY'RE
JUVENILE SEVEN
TAILED CRUPS.





TIME TO
GET UP
SON.
WE'RE
HERE.



WHERE?
NAMOSI?

YES.
GET DRESSED.
MEET ME IN
THE HOLD.



THE CLOTHES
FIT YOU FINE?

YEAH.
A LITTLE
BIG.

YOU'LL GROW
INTO THEM.

NOW COME
HERE.

IT'S TIME FOR
YOU TO OFFICIALLY
BECOME A MAN.



BUT I'M NOT
FOURTEEN.

AGE IS ONE
MEASURE OF TIME.
EXPERIENCE IS
ANOTHER.

I WAS YOUNGER THAN
YOU WHEN THE PRIEST
TIED MY HAIR.

DO YOU
KNOW THE
WORDS?

YES.

SAY
THEM.



TODAY I AM THE
AGE TO LEAVE MY
CHILDHOOD BEHIND.

TODAY I AM THE AGE TO
TAKE UPON THE BURDENS
OF MEN.

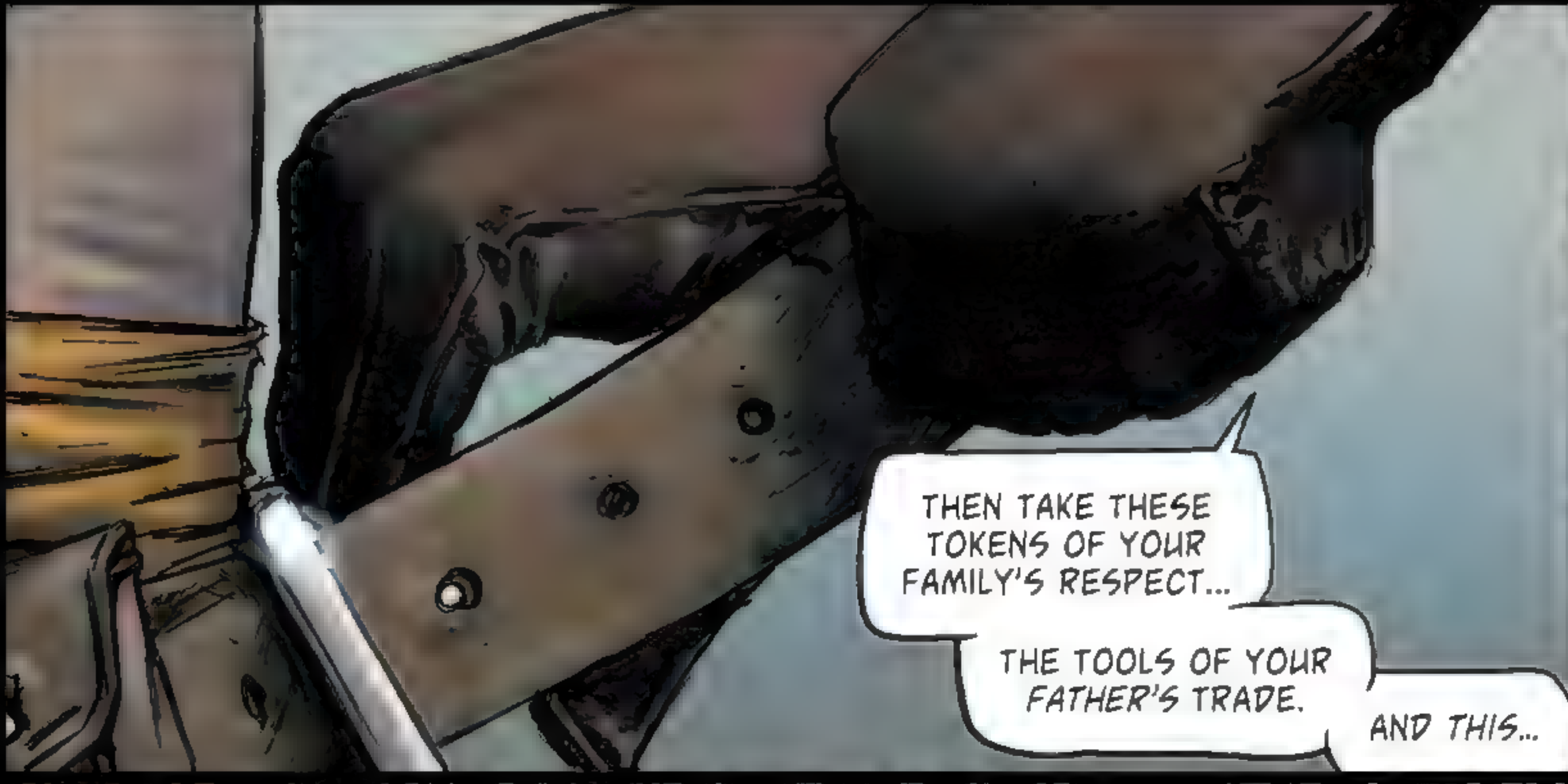
FAMILY,
FAITH,
AND
FRIENDSHIP...

THESE ARE MINE TO HONOR
AND REPRESENT TO ALL WHO
SEE ME OR HEAR MY WORDS.



DO YOU
AVOW THIS
AS A FREE
BEING?

THIS I VOW AS
A FREE BEING.



THEN TAKE THESE
TOKENS OF YOUR
FAMILY'S RESPECT...

THE TOOLS OF YOUR
FATHER'S TRADE.

AND THIS...



...YOUR MOTHER'S
WEDDING BAND.

MAY THEY BE
REMINDERS OF THE
ESTEEM AND LOVE THEY
HAD FOR THEIR CHILD AND
FOR THE MAN WHO
STANDS HERE NOW.



STEP FORWARD
AS A SYMBOL OF YOUR
CROSSING THE HORIZON
OF YOUTH AND BE KNOWN
NO LONGER AS A CHILD...

..BUT AS MEA...
ONE OF US.



MEA KEL.

I'M PROUD OF YOU.
YOUR MOTHER TAUGHT
YOU WELL. YOU DIDN'T
MISS A WORD.

THANK YOU SIR.
I ALWAYS LIKED THE
WORDS. I REMEMBER
FROM ALIX'S CEREMONY.
AFTER THAT I ASKED
HER TO HELP ME
LEARN THEM.

I WISH,
AND I KNOW SHE
WOULD HAVE WISHED, THAT
SHE COULD HAVE GIVEN YOU
MORE... AT LEAST SOMETHING
MORE FITTING TO A MAN--
BUT THE RING IS ALL THEY
RETURNED TO ME.

NO.
I LIKE IT.
IT'S HERS.

GOOD.

THIS IS YOUR NEW LIFE.
IT WILL NOT BE AN EASY
ONE--ESPECIALLY WITHOUT
HER--AND YOU WILL NEED
MORE TOUGHNESS. TO STAY
ALIVE OUT HERE, YOU WILL
NEED YOUR EYES, HEAD,
HANDS AND HEART.



..BUT
WHATEVER
ELSE COMES
WE MEET IT
TOGETHER.

YOU.
AND ME.

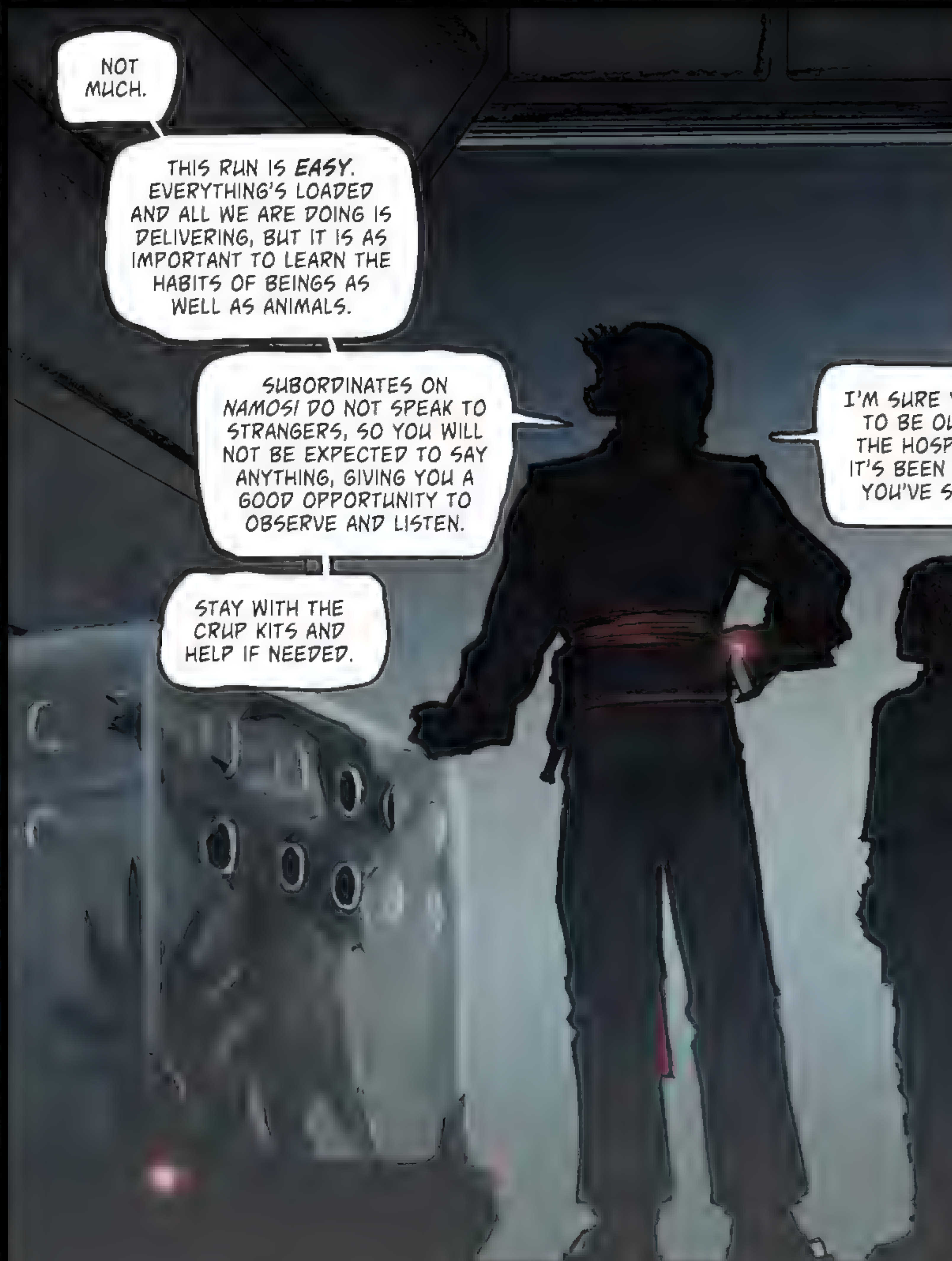
HER KELS.

NOW,
ARE YOU
READY TO GO
TO WORK?



YES SIR!

WHAT DO
I HAVE
TO DO?



NOT
MUCH.

THIS RUN IS EASY.
EVERYTHING'S LOADED
AND ALL WE ARE DOING IS
DELIVERING, BUT IT IS AS
IMPORTANT TO LEARN THE
HABITS OF BEINGS AS
WELL AS ANIMALS.

SUBORDINATES ON
NAMOSI DO NOT SPEAK TO
STRANGERS, SO YOU WILL
NOT BE EXPECTED TO SAY
ANYTHING, GIVING YOU A
GOOD OPPORTUNITY TO
OBSERVE AND LISTEN.

STAY WITH THE
CRUP KITS AND
HELP IF NEEDED.

I'M SURE YOU CAN'T WAIT
TO BE OUTSIDE. FROM
THE HOSPITAL TO HERE,
IT'S BEEN MONTHS SINCE
YOU'VE SEEN THE SKY.

YEAH.

WELL IT'S A FAIR DISTANCE
FROM THE LANDING TO THE
RECEIVING YARD.
THE PRIN'ETH TREES ARE IN
FULL COLOR, IT SHOULD BE A
GOOD CHANCE TO STRETCH
OUR LEGS AND GET PLENTY
OF FRESH AIR.

SOAK IT IN, BECAUSE WHEN
WE'RE DONE HERE WE HAVE
A LONG TRIP AHEAD OF US.

TO
WHERE?

THE RESRENAR SYSTEM
TO MEET UP WITH UNCLE
BERM AND THE REST OF
THE CREW.

Tajuk Liu M...
R...
NAMO SI

SULEVAN NAMOSI.
UL'FERUHAN HUA
TA 'HIBILOSH.

YOUR ACCENT *STILL*
IS TERRIBLE, MEA KEL...

..BUT IT
WARMS MY
EARS TO
HEAR IT.

HOW YOU
ARE ABROS?

IT HAS BEEN
A LONG TIME.

NEARLY
THREE YEARS,
FERU.

I'M SURPRISED
TO STILL SEE YOU
KEEPING.

NOT A KEEPER ANYMORE,
I AM *DIRECTOR* NOW. I AM SURPRISED
TO SEE YOU MAKING TRANSFER RUNS.

STRANGE TIMES
BRING ODD TASKS.

TRUE
ENOUGH.

I HEARD ABOUT
THE PLAGUE. I AM
GLADDENED TO SEE
YOUR BOY ESCAPED.
THAT IS YOUR SON
IS IT NOT?

IT IS MY SON.
TYRELLUN.

AND HOW FARES
YOUR WIFE?

MY WIFE... *EOHI* DID
NOT ESCAPE.

MY
SYMPATHIES.

HAZ'IMAI AND I
WILL SAY PRAYERS
FOR HER.

I HEARD OF THE FINANCIAL CRISIS IN
WAKE OF THE PLAGUE.

I HAVE A *JOB*--
IF YOU ARE INTERESTED?

THANK YOU,
BUT NO.

I LEFT MEN OUT
ON *ANOTHER* JOB,
BEYOND THE RIM. I
NEED TO GET BACK
OUT THERE.

THE PROCEEDS OF THIS RUN
SHOULD BE ENOUGH FOR FUEL TO
GET THERE AND FINISH IT, AND THE
OTHER *SHOULD* BE ENOUGH TO
BEGIN REBUILDING UNTIL THINGS
ARE SORTED AGAIN.

AH, BUT *THIS* JOB I HAVE
WAS MEANT FOR *QAUREC*.
HE HAS STOLEN MANY FROM YOU,
PERHAPS YOU *STEAL* ONE BACK
ON YOUR WAY TO THE RIM?

I HAVE TY NOW.
HE HAS THINGS TO LEARN
BEFORE WE HUNT FOR MY
USUAL SORT OF QUARRY.



THEN THIS IS *PERFECT*. IT IS NOTHING DIFFICULT. BAL'PHREY NEEDS A FEGDAM FOR THEIR BUCK.

I WAS BRAGGING TO HIM THAT THERE WAS NOT A FINER SPECIMEN THAN THE ONE YOU GOT ME...AND FOR LESS THAN QAUREC DEMANDS.

PERHAPS YOU CAN GET HIM ONE, MAYBE NOT QUITE SO FINE AS *OURS*, BUT BETTER THAN THE FEC THAT QAUREC'S CREWS BRING IN.

YOU KNOW THE *BAL*. THEY PAY WELL--IN HARD CURRENCY AND TRADE GOODS. USEFUL BEYOND THE RIM.

A FEGDAM *WOULD* BE A GOOD START FOR TY...

TELL PHREY I'LL GET HIM A PRIME DAM...A FOUR HUMPER.

--OR PERHAPS A THREE. WE WOULD NOT WANT THE TOURISTS TO PASS NAMOSI BY.



DONE. BUT KEEP THE WORD ON LOWCOMM. IF THIS IS QAUREC'S BUSINESS I DON'T WANT TO TANGLE WITH HIM WITH TY AROUND.

I'VE BEEN OFF-CHANNEL FOR A WHILE AND I WANT IT TO STAY THAT WAY FOR NOW.

I SHALL SEND IT BY *PERSON*. I HAVE A COURIER GOING TO WALODK THE DAY AFTER MORROW.

FARE YOU WELL.
UL'ABROS HUA'TE
VIASHI-MOA SESH INU.

VIASHI-MOA TO YOU TOO OLD FRIEND.



WHAT'S A FEGDAM?

SO YOU *WERE* LISTENING!

IT'S A FEMALE FEG IN HER BREEDING YEARS.

YOU'LL SEE.

AND WHO'S COW-WRECK?

QAUREC'S AN ORANEAN LET'S HOPE WE DON'T SEE.



ABROS
WHERE ARE
YOU?...



LET'S
TRACE YOUR
SIGNAL AND...



WHAT
THE F*CK WAS
THAT!!

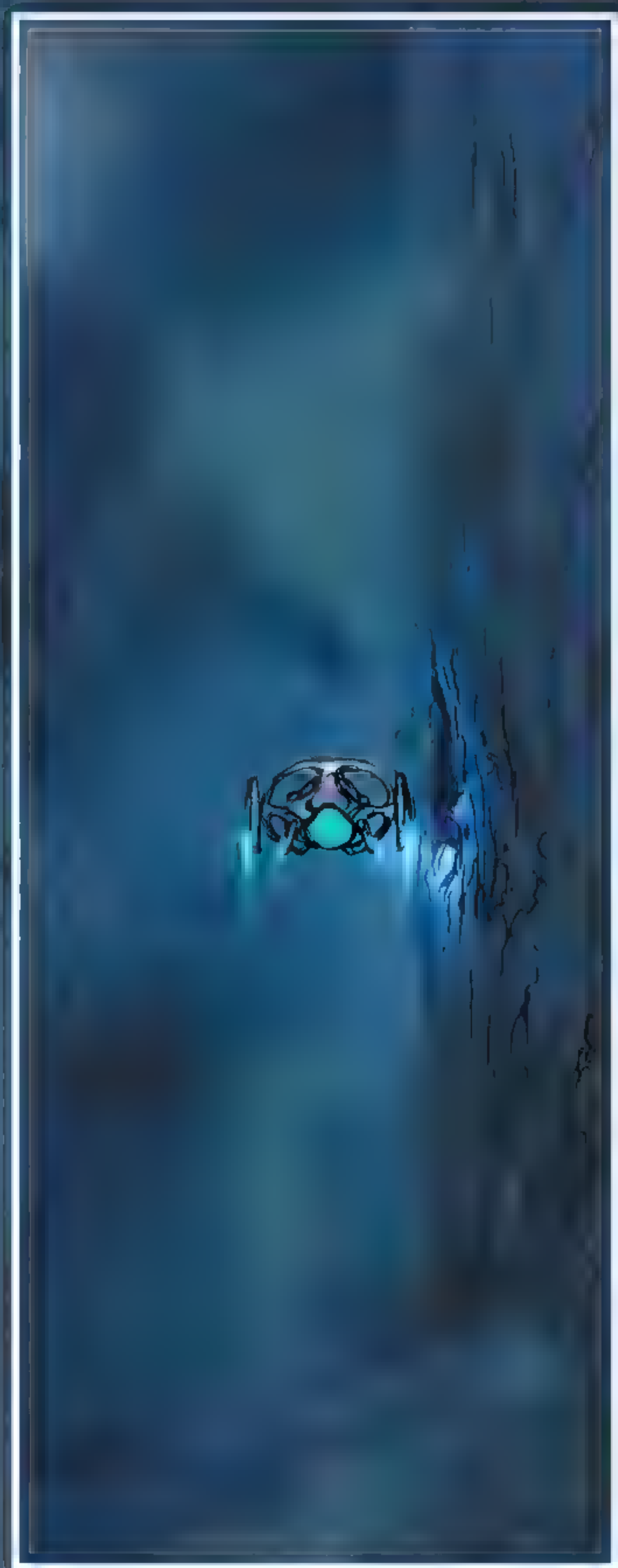


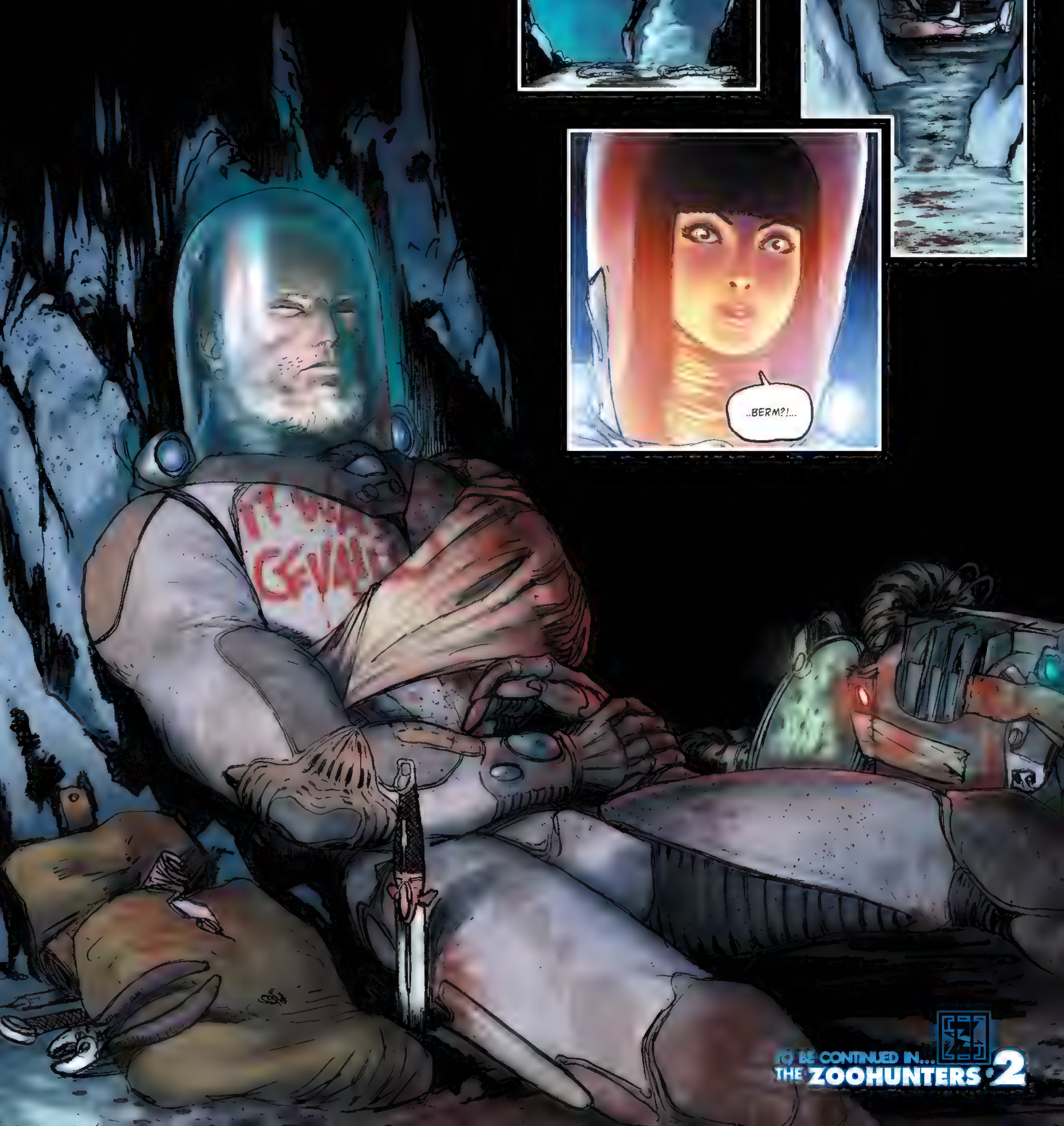
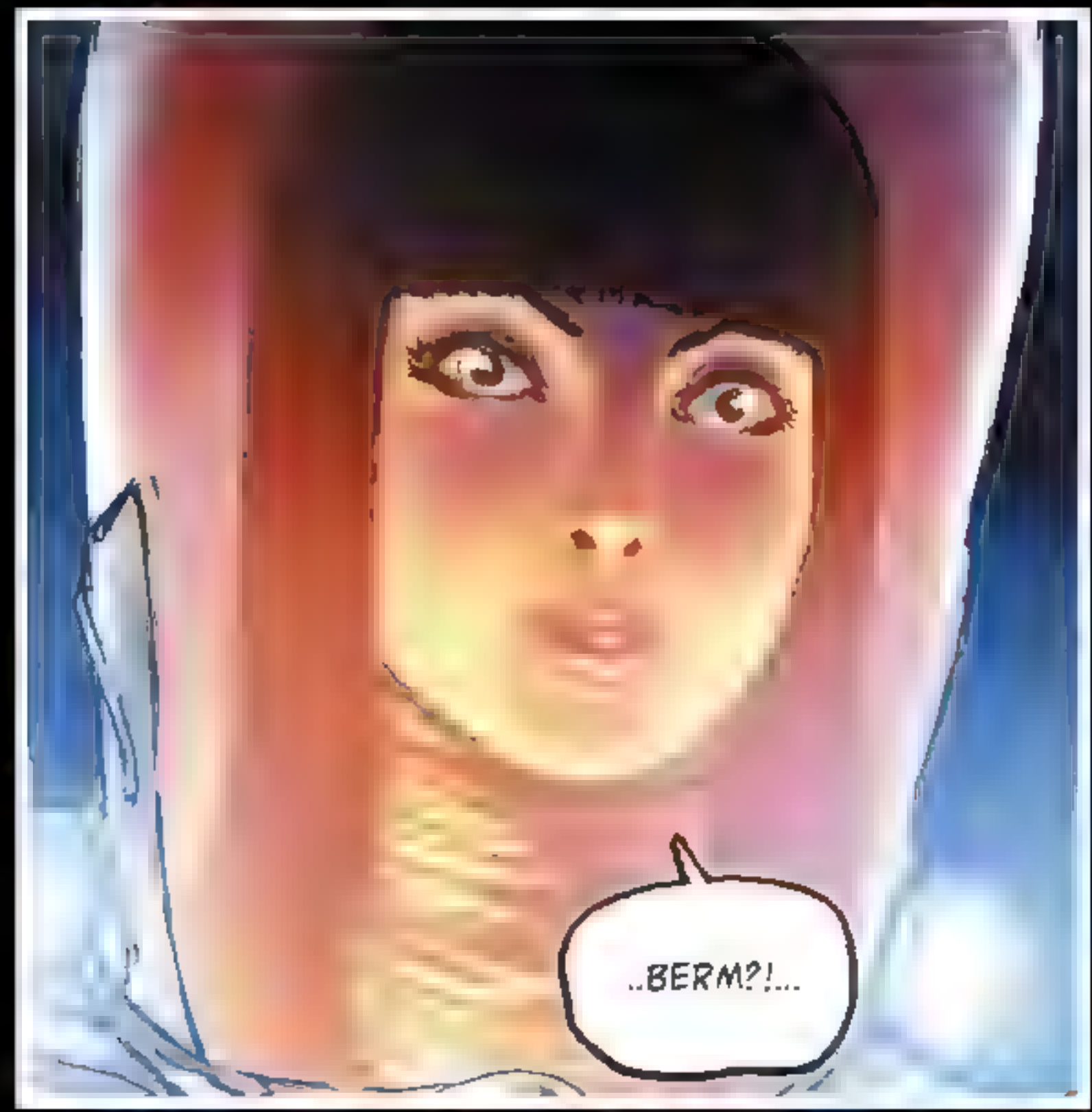
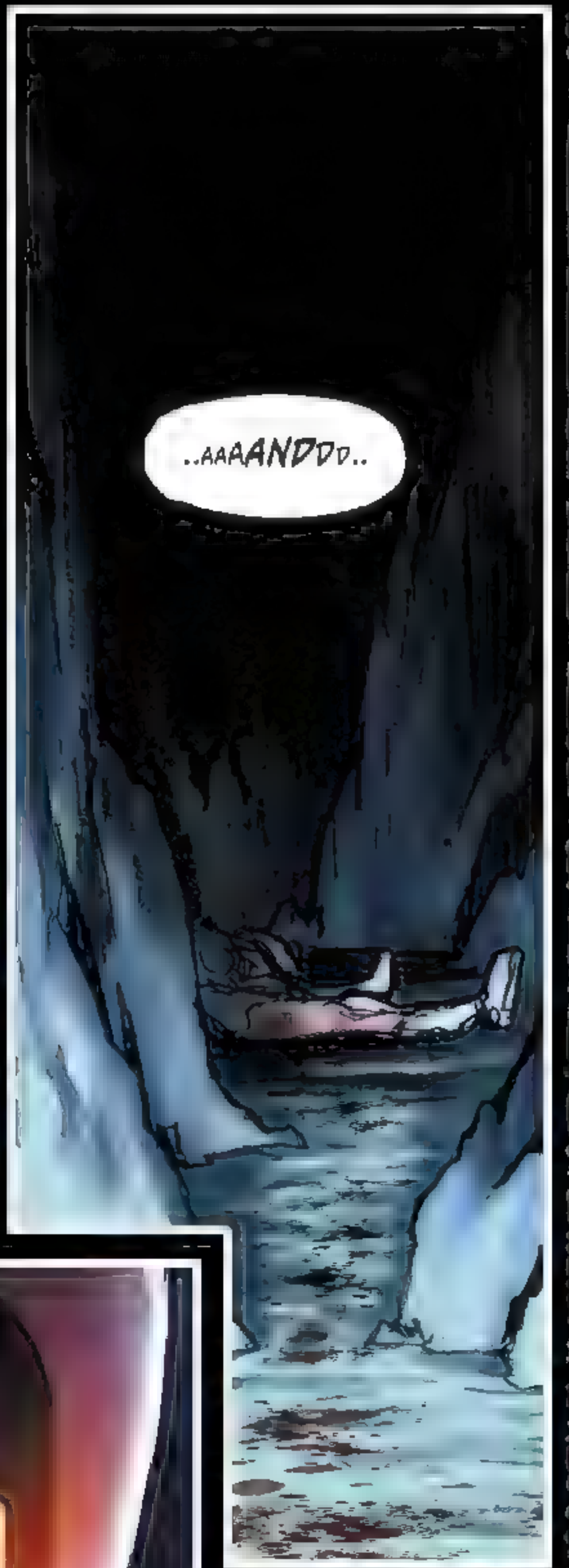
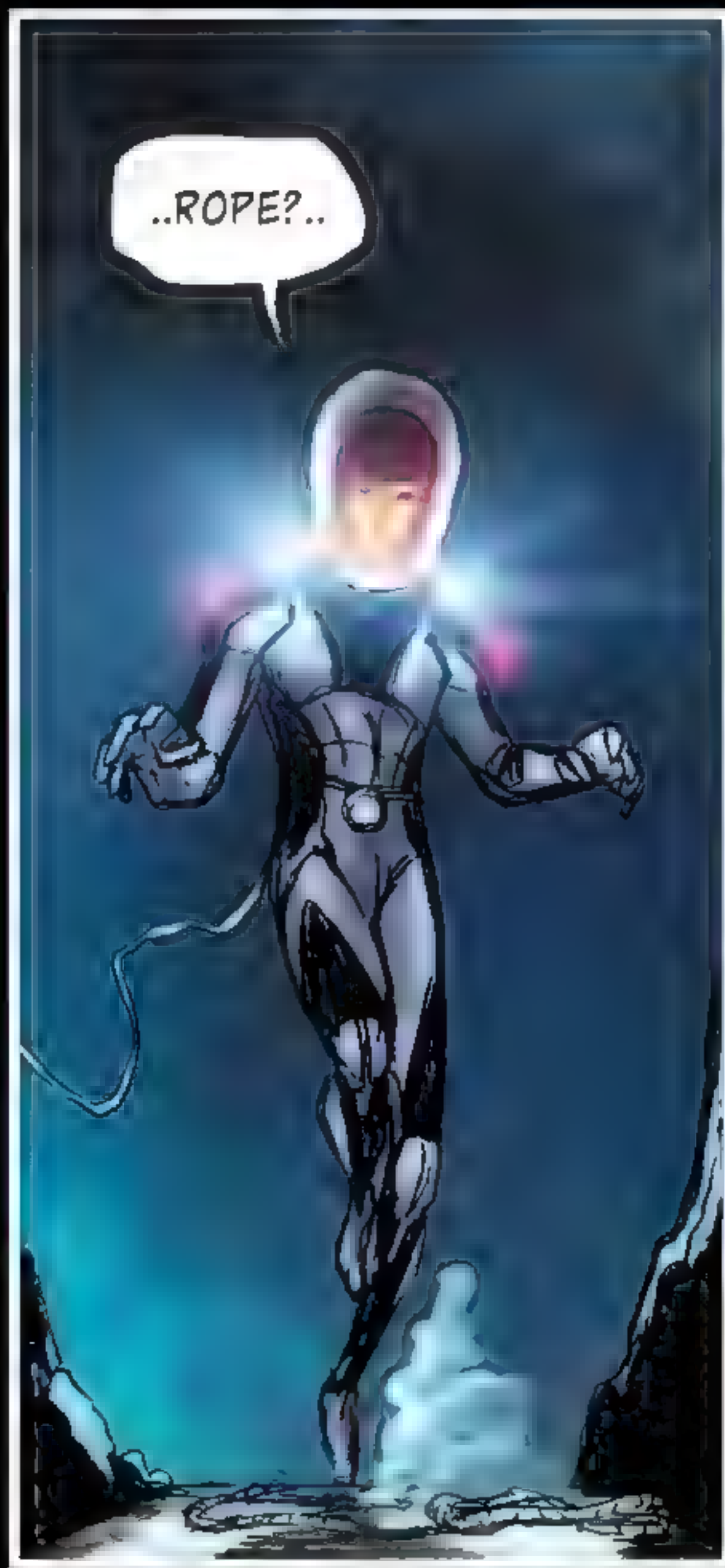
DAMMIT.

WHY DIDN'T
THAT SHOW
UP ON THE
SENSORS?



I'M NOT
READY TO
BE DINNER
TODAY!





THE ZOO HUNTERS

PETER STEIGERWALD'S

#2

OF 6



COVER A



THE ZOOHUNTERS

#2
OF 6

ASPEN
COVER B



THE ZOOHUNTERS

"FEGDAM FUGUE"

by FRANK MASTROMAURO

DAN-TO-RAH-YO'S HORN BUTTE
NAJ-INHEL DRY SEA: **REVAD**

Dear Mom—
It still feels strange to write to
you like this knowing you'll never
read these.

You died.

The plague that killed you took
more than a billion lives. As soon
as I got out of the hospital I
started reading up on it.

Now I know why the doctors and everyone said
I was so lucky. There is no one to go home to,
even if we could go home. Our whole planet's
still declared off-limits.

DO YOU
SEE IT?

YES.

UNDER
THAT BUSH.

THAT IS THE
NAJ-SURI.

A SOLITARY
PREDATOR AND
HE WHOM WE
HUNT TODAY.

I miss you and all my friends, and I
don't know what to do. It's hard to
think about. It doesn't seem real
somehow. I have been trying not to
be sad but it's so lonely out here.

I am a man now.

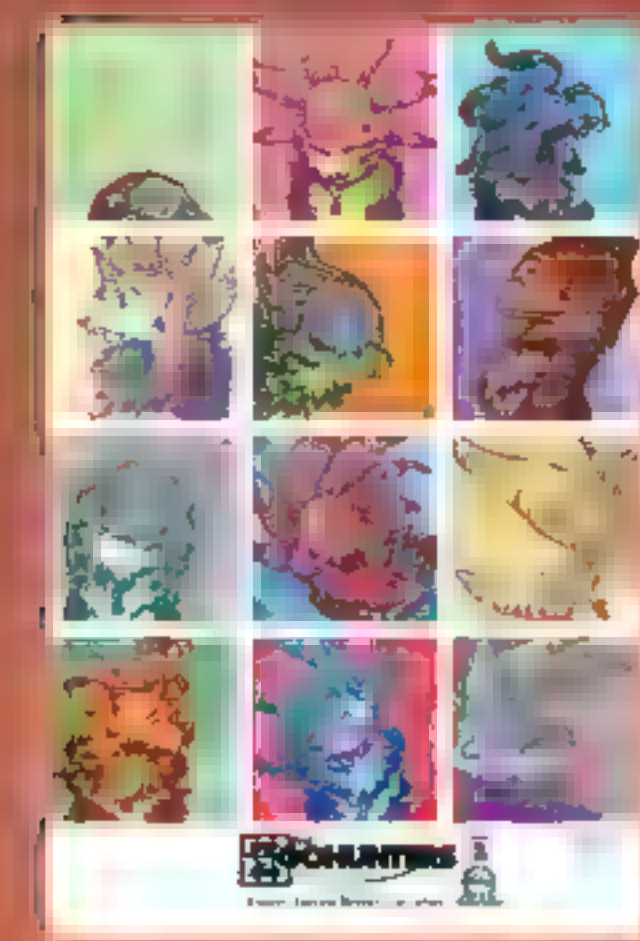
Dad did the ceremony on the ship. There was no priest
or a party, but there couldn't be. I used to get
mad about dad not being around. I know you didn't
like that, but it turned out to be a good thing. If
he really was like other fathers he might not be
alive too, and I'd really be alone... an orphan.



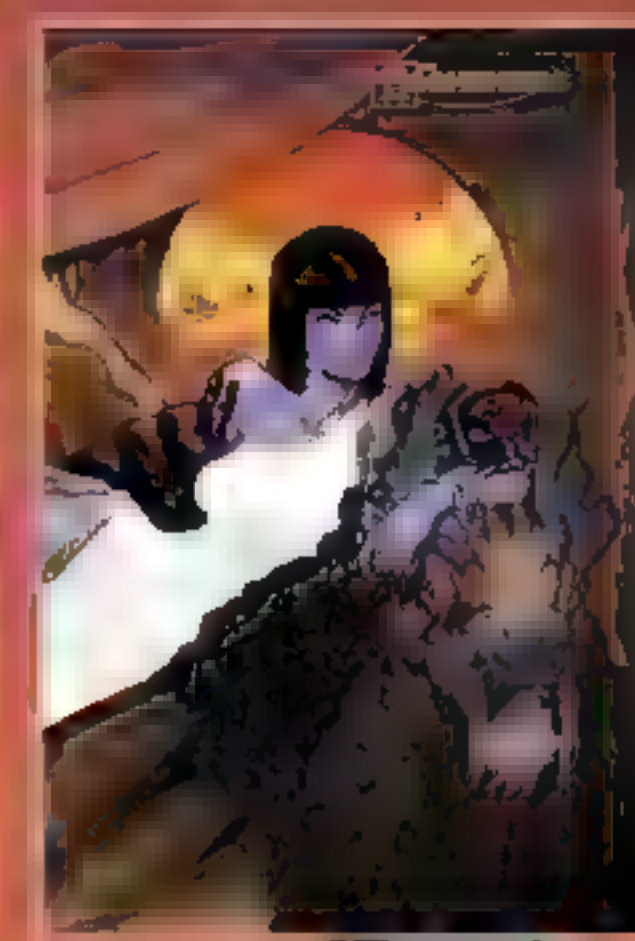
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HOW ARE
YOU GOING TO
CAPTURE IT?

TY, NOT ALL
HUNTS MUST END IN
A CAPTURE OR KILL
OF THE ANIMAL.

TODAY'S HUNT IS
ABOUT THEIR SPIRIT.

THE BRIDE WILL SHARE HER SPIRIT WITH THE NAJ-SURI AND SHOW HER FAMILY HER SKILL, STRENGTH AND BRAVERY.

SO IT'S ALL LIKE
A CEREMONY?

YES.

THIS HUNT IS
A METAPHOR
AS WELL.

WE BEGIN THE GREAT CYCLE **ALONE**.
AS WE MOVE 'ROUND ITS EDGES,
DIFFICULTIES...CHALLENGES ARISE.
TO OVERCOME THOSE QUICKSANDS
WE WILL NEED **HELP**.

7 YET, DESPITE ASSISTANCE FROM
THOSE THAT INTERSECT OUR CYCLE,
THE FINAL STEPS...THE NOBLE ENDS...
MUST BE MET, AND CONQUERED, ALONE.

Dad's begun training me in hunting. A lot of it so far is reading, which I like. It's like school and it keeps my mind off all the scarier things.

He doesn't keep files or computer archives. All his research is in journals. (Like this journal.) He writes them himself and he draws the animals and the plants, landmarks, and maps too.

I know you said he drew too, that I got my art from him, but I didn't know he could draw so well. They're better than camera pictures, at least I think so. I really like it a lot that he's like me and has a journal too. I wonder if he still writes to you.

ALONE, SHE HAS USED HER
SKILL AND TRACKED HER
QUARRY HERE.

IN A MOMENT
SHE WILL CALL TO THE
HA-RUH AND RIDERS
FOR **HELP--**
TO JOIN HER FOR
THE **CHASE.**

HER FAMILY AND HER HUSBAND'S
RIDE TOGETHER BEHIND HER AS AN
ACT OF UNITY--THE COMING TOGETHER
OF THEIR TRIBES. FOR IT IS *SHE* WHO
BRINGS FAMILY TOGETHER.

O-AH-YEH.

EEYO
HA TA-AAN
JH-NASHH...

YAAN-JADEEF-KHAAIIIIIIIIII!!!

I've been spending most of the last few days in the log-room reading up on the flora and fauna of Revad. (I learned those words, they mean plants and animals.)

It's my favorite place. The books smell like leather and parchment and they absorb sound. There's no echoes or engine hum or any clanking, it's the only truly quiet place on the ship.

I was reading up on Revad because it's where we had to go to capture the fegdam. Fegs live in the ground and are giant ambush worms that sit and wait for prey to come by.

They only come above ground to mate and it's so rare that they are spotted not alone in the wild that they call a group of feg an unlikeliness. I liked that. An unlikeliness of fegs.

WE ALL WEAR THE
MARKINGS OF THE NAJ-SURI
SO HE WILL SEE THAT WE COME AS
SISTERS AND BROTHERS.
STILL, THE NAJ-SURI MUST
TEST US AND OUR HA-RUH.



SO HE RUNS. FOR THAT IS WHO HE IS.

TO PROVE TO HIM WHO WE ARE...
WE MUST HAVE SPEED... AND STAMINA TOO.

BUT WE ARE MORE THAN RUNNERS.
WE HAVE STRATEGY. OF THE TRIBE
AND THE PACK.

THE RIDERS
DRAW THE
NOOSE TIGHT
AS THE
NAJ-SURI
TIRES.

The female is a doe unless she's breedable, then she's a dam. The males are bucks and the young before the first pupation are pips and after that, before adulthood they are called sprouts.

We found one pretty easily once we got there, but it almost got away when we were trapping it. I set the snare but my knot slipped and the rope came loose from the stake. Dad caught the rope and wrestled it in so I could throw the net, then I shot it with a tranquilizer. He didn't get mad at me, I thought he would, but he said it was a lesson learned.

PREDATORS SURROUNDING PREDATOR.
CONFINED, HE TURNS TO FIGHT--
EVEN THOUGH HE CANNOT WIN.

The Kiri we wear are turning out to be really useful. Dad used his to cover the eyes of the fegdam and keep her calm, and we wore them on our other hunt as turbans to keep out the sun.

STAY
BEHIND
ME TY.

JUST IN
CASE.

BUT THIS IS NOT ABOUT
DEATH, BUT LIFE.
AND SPIRIT.

THE BRIDE
BEGINS THE
CHANT.

AND THE
OTHERS JOIN
HER.

NOM-JE JE-ZHEJA

NOM-JE JE-ZHEJA

NOM-JE JE-ZHEJA

JE-JA SOM-NE

NOM-JE JE-ZHEJA

NOM-JE JE-ZHEJA

NOM-JE JE-ZHEJA

--OF DESERT AND OF SKY,
TO YOU THE PEACE OF AGES--

NOM-JE JE-ZHEJA NOM-JE JE-ZHEJA
JE-JA SOM-NE WEI

THEN CLEAN WATER
FROM HER HOME WELL...

...FOR HER
SPIRIT...

...AND THE
DESERT'S.

A LAST INVOCATION.
A SILENT PRAYER
FOR COURAGE...

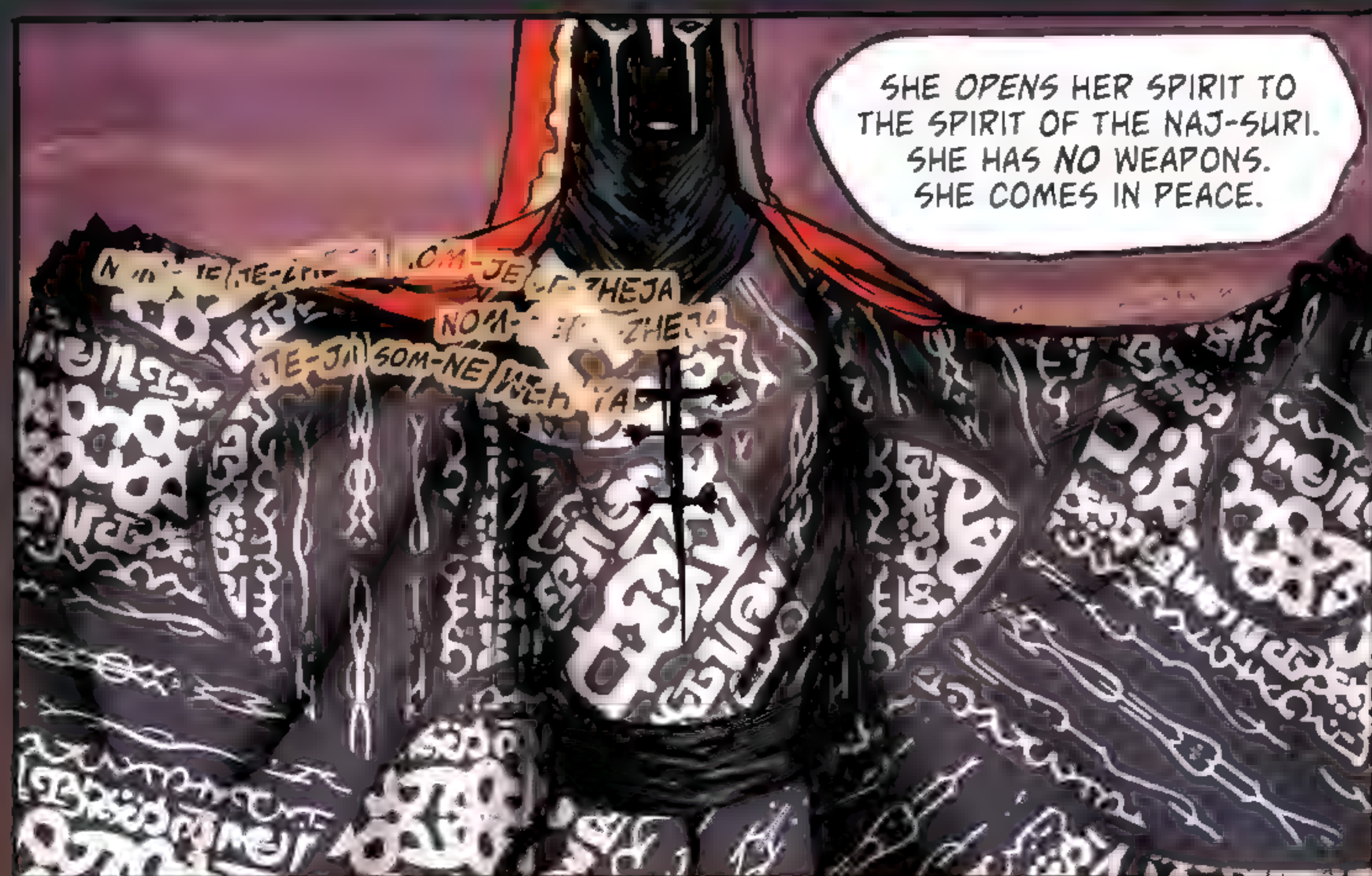
I didn't have to do much on our other hunt. We just watched mostly. It was with the Ang-Kibuni people. They helped us load the feg into the pod and one of them, Maou-Te-Zaho-Hu, knew dad and said he was the son of Nom-Te-Wal-Te. We were invited to have a meal and to go on a bridal hunt.

I got a quick lesson in riding a ha-ruh. Everyone said I was really good. It was weird, because of the way they run, you have to lean forward a lot and my legs hurt by the end of the day. Mine was white and gray with red spots and was named Rhu-Oo-Lal-Du. His name meant a fast moving thunder cloud. Then they painted our faces and our ha-ruh to match the naj-suri's markings. Nom-Te-Wal-Te let me put my handprint on the side of Rhu-Oo-Lal-Du when they were painting him. It all felt very serious even though the people were laughing and joking. I didn't understand it because it was in their language, but dad knew some.



..BEFORE
THE DANCE
BEGINS.

SHE APPROACHES ALONE.
WITHOUT THE PROTECTION OF
HER PEOPLE OR HER HA-RUH.



SHE OPENS HER SPIRIT TO
THE SPIRIT OF THE NAJ-SURI.
SHE HAS NO WEAPONS.
SHE COMES IN PEACE.

THEN SHE
DANCES.



MOVING CLOSER
SLOWLY, SHE SEEKS TO
PUT THE NAJ-SURI
AT EASE.

TO DO SO SHE
MUST PUT FEAR
ASIDE AND TRUST
IN HER SPIRIT.

SHE SHOWS
COURAGE TO NOT
ONLY THE NAJ-SURI
BUT HER FUTURE
HUSBAND AND THEIR
FAMILIES.

THIS DANCE IS NOT WITHOUT DANGER.
HE IS WILD. SHE HAS ONLY HER DANCE AND
MANTRA. MANY A BRIDE HAS GONE TO THE
BRIDAL TENT SCARRED, MISSING A HAND...
OR LEFT HER TENT ALTOGETHER EMPTY.

Nom-Te-Wal-Te didn't look old but he said that he has great-grandchildren, and that he was old enough to remember my great grandfather, though he was just a boy then. Dad's been quiet since we got to their camp. Nom-Te-Wal-Te has been talking to me mostly. I like his accent.



BUT IF HER
SPIRIT IS **STRONG**,
HE WILL LAY DOWN
FOR HER...

..AND SHE MAY
TOUCH HIM. TAKE
A TOKEN OF HIS
SPIRIT WITH HER...

..SO THAT SHE MAY REMEMBER
THE **HEART OF THE WILD**.
TO HAVE THE STRENGTH TO FIGHT FOR
HERSELF AGAINST ALL ODDS AND THE
WISDOM OF PEACE THAT SHARES IN THE
SPIRITS OF OTHER BEINGS.

Which is good because he talked me through the whole hunt, but when it was over it left me thinking of you.



THEN HE RETURNS
TO THE DESERT.

A PIECE OF HER
WITH HIM.

A PIECE OF HIM
WITH HER.

How you did the same thing the bride did.
Even though there were people all around, I felt alone.
Like the naj-suri walking into the desert.

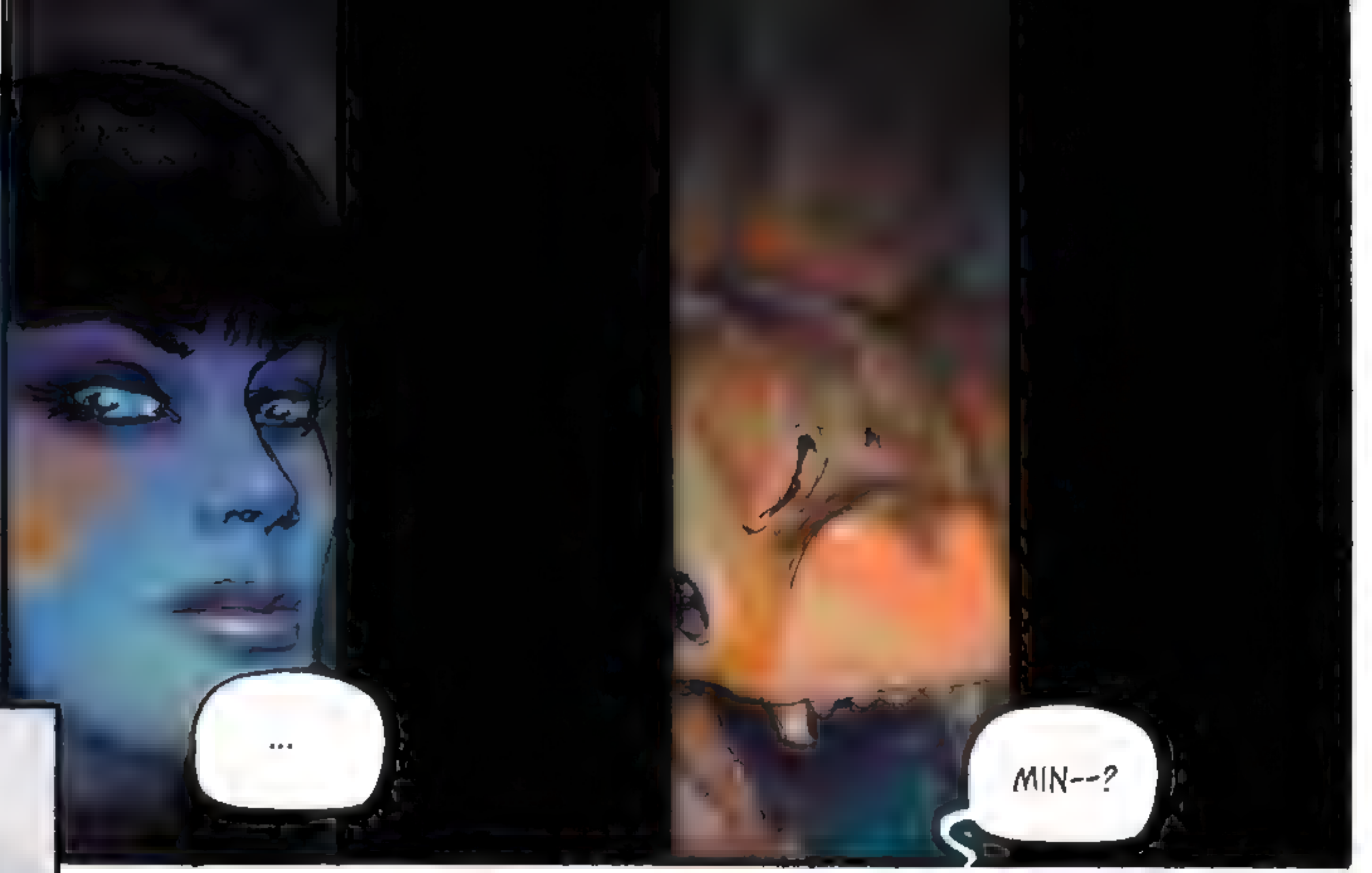
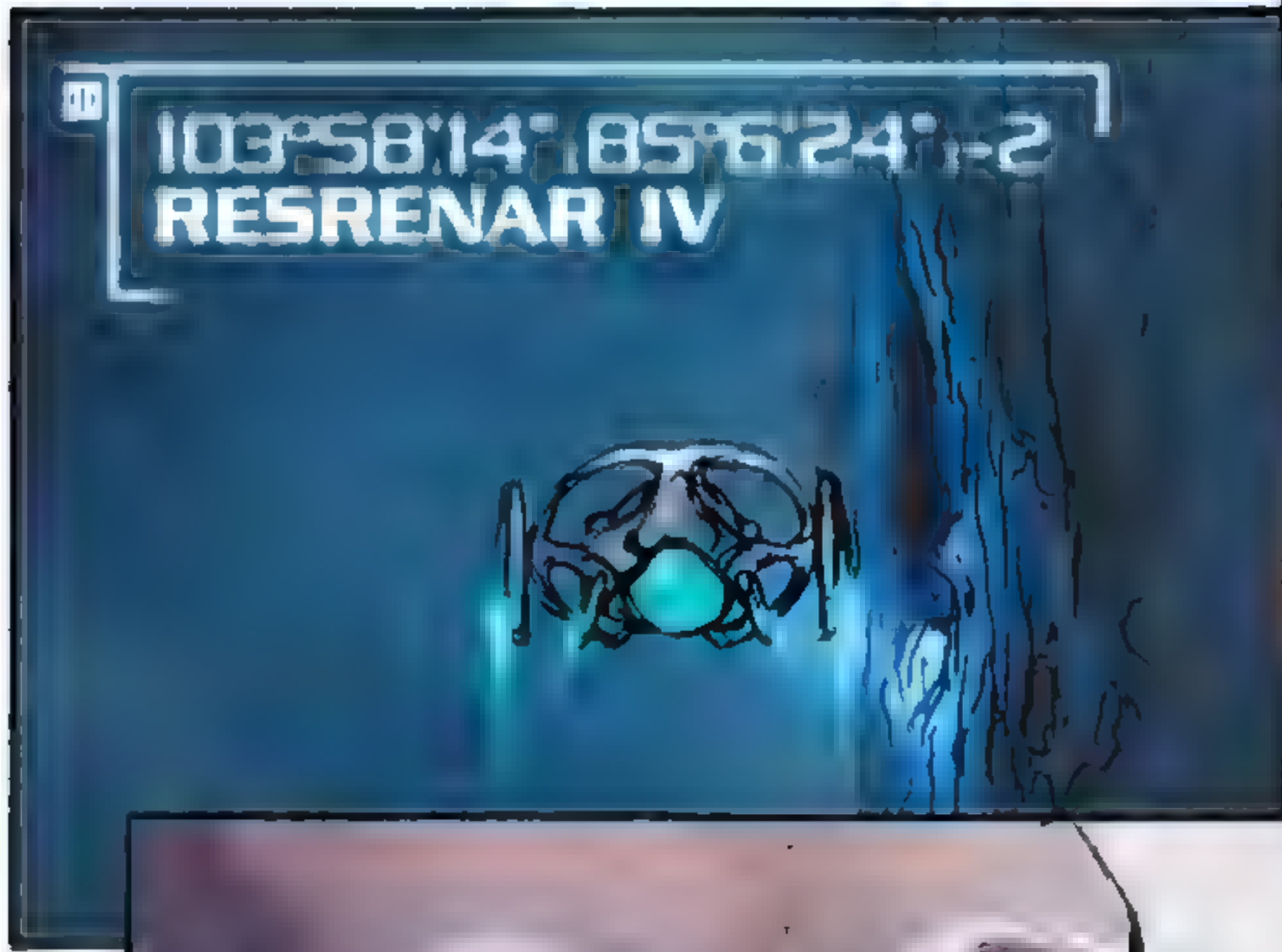


WHAT
HAPPENS
NOW?

SHE AND HER
HUSBAND-TO-BE
WILL GO ON TO BUILD
THEIR WEDDING TENT
AND DO THEIR
OTHER FAMILY
CEREMONIES.

WE WILL MAKE
CAMP AND GIVE
THE HA-RUH
THEIR REST.

FOR NIGHT IS
FALLING AND IT
HAS BEEN A
LONG DAY OF
RIDING.





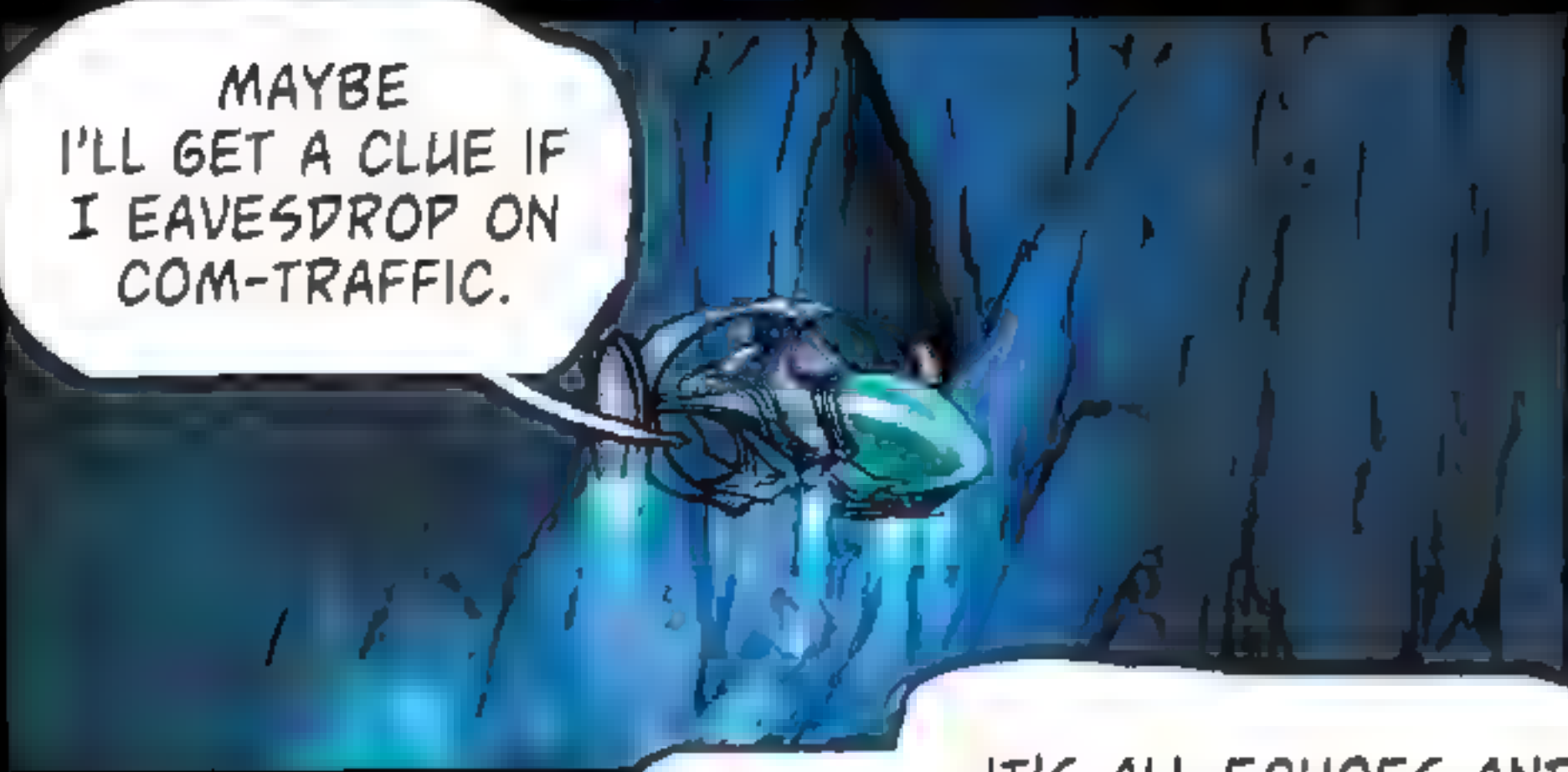
HOW AM I GOING TO FIND HIM..?

IF IT WASN'T FOR BERM I COULD SIT HERE AND WAIT.

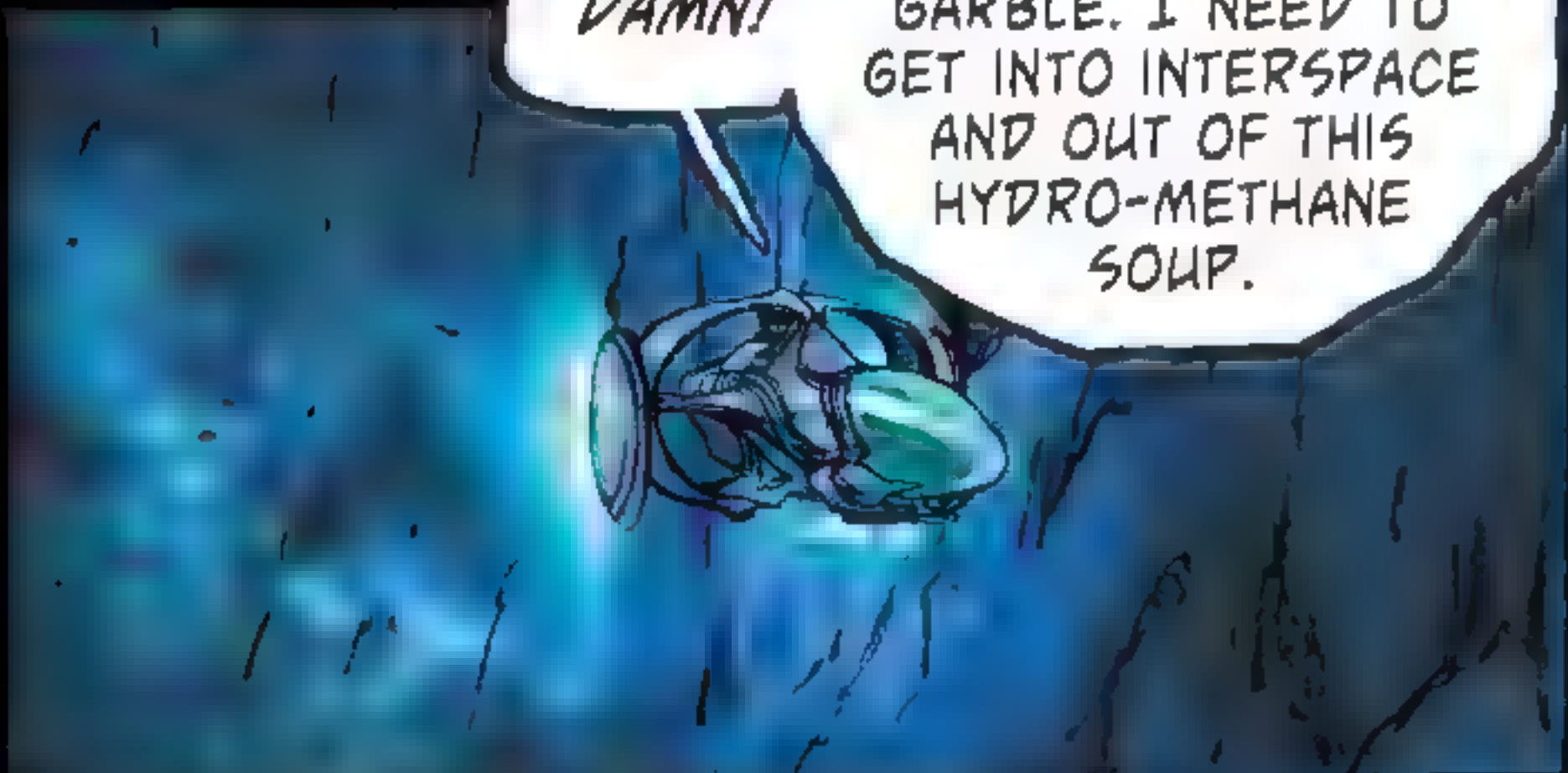


WE'RE TOO FAR OUT. THE ENTIRE GRID IS EMPTY.

THERE'S NOT *ONE* SHIP IN ANY OF THE SURROUNDING SYSTEMS.



MAYBE I'LL GET A CLUE IF I EAVESDROP ON COM-TRAFFIC.



DAMN!

IT'S ALL ECHOES AND GARBLE. I NEED TO GET INTO INTERSPACE AND OUT OF THIS HYDRO-METHANE SOUP.



SIGNAL'S CLEAR BUT FAINT.

SIM...
GIVE ME A WIDE-CHANNEL SINGLE-END CAST. LET'S TURN *EVERYONE* ON.



--ARK FIVE THO--

--OBAH SYS--

--EWITYD NUYS--

--ANGDAK KO HELLAR--

--MONT. OH--

--WE SENT FOUR CAS--

--PUOLQ KZYLD-SH--

--SPILL THE UPANTO--

--ONG AND PROS--

--HENG HET USIP PRU--

--RXA'GY--

--OPA--

--WEGA SHEV YULANGADK BERSA SA--

--ORKING PERF--

--ANY DID YOU SEE--

--GOOLOO BORUU HU--

--OVE Y--

--GAN ME--

--AREST BR--

--WISH HE DID--

--TUK VE AHR NA'TUK V--

--AW ELV--

--OVER

WHEN

--A'DIX NU--

--ILL THE B--

--Y DID THE GHOA--

--J COMEBACK HA--

--INITY AND BEY--

--AGAIN--

--UJHOMWIS LUBUY'MOH GHARGHME--

--SAY I'FOONK--

--REY CANCELLED THE FEG J--

--HUEK NAF--

--WHY--

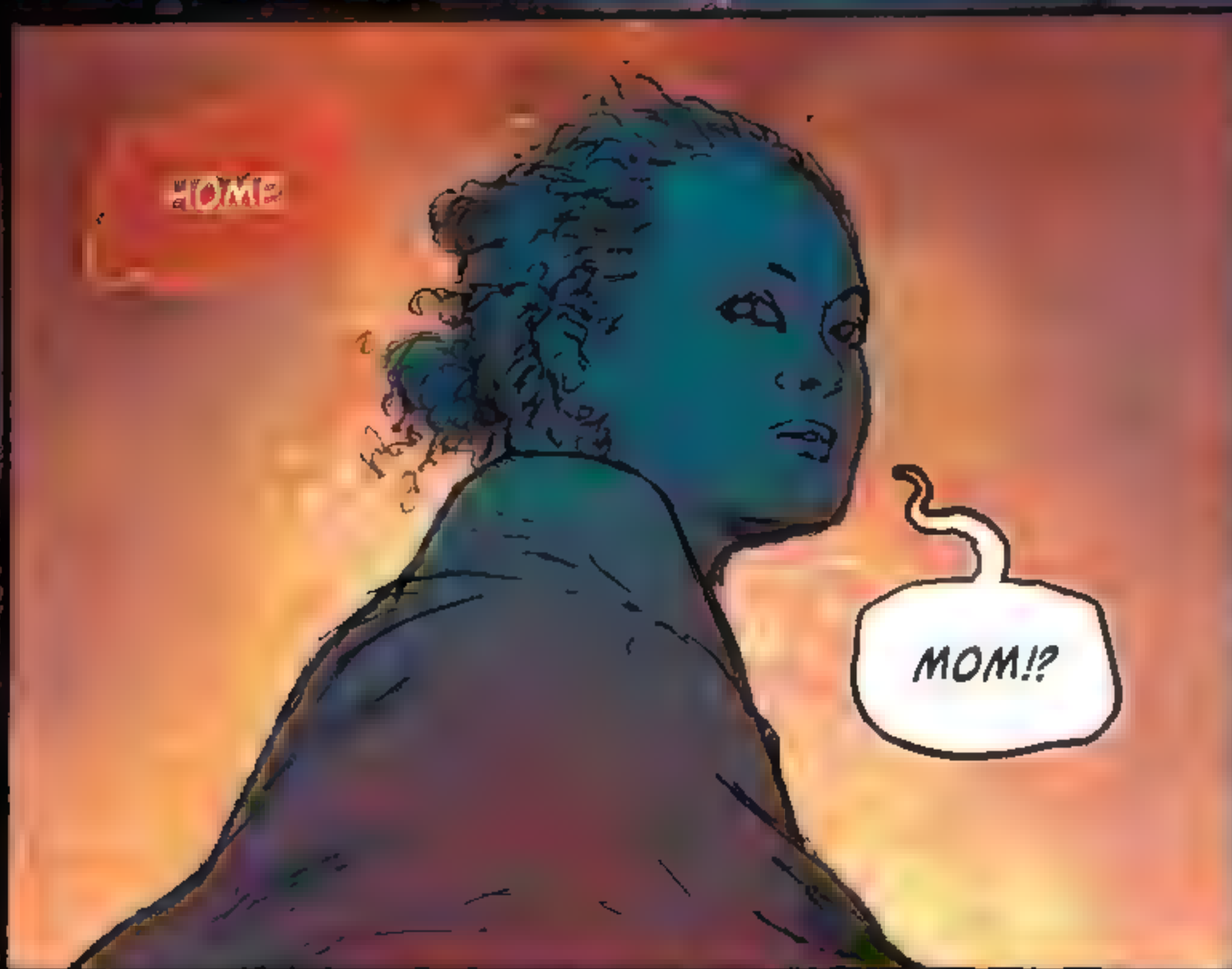


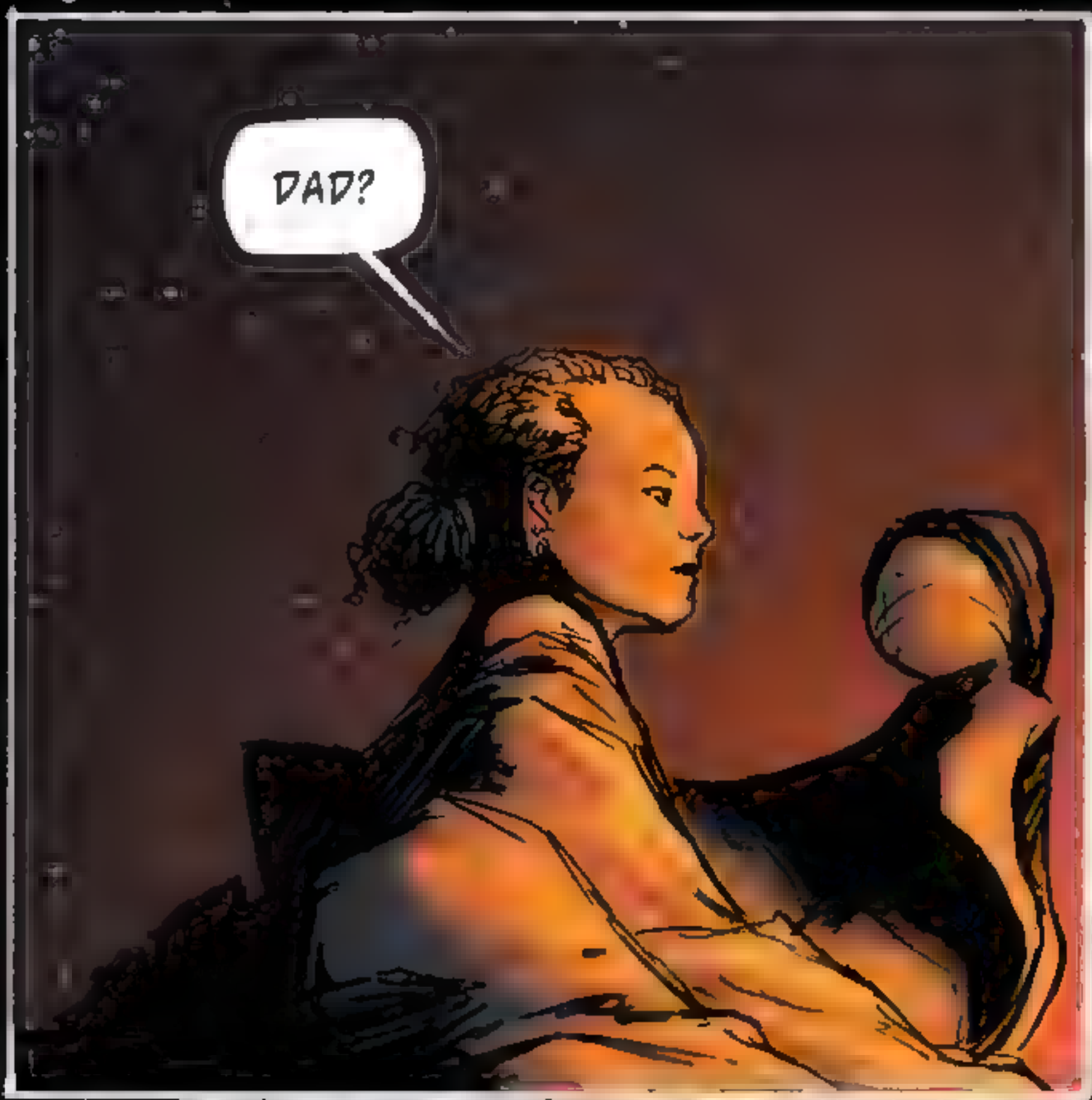
--SAY I'FOONK--

--REY CANCELLED THE FEG J--

--HUEK NAF--

--WHY--





DAD?



NOM-TE-WAL-TE?

AM I STILL DREAMING?

NO.

THIS IS THE WAKING WORLD.



WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

WHY ARE YOU SITTING THERE LIKE THAT?

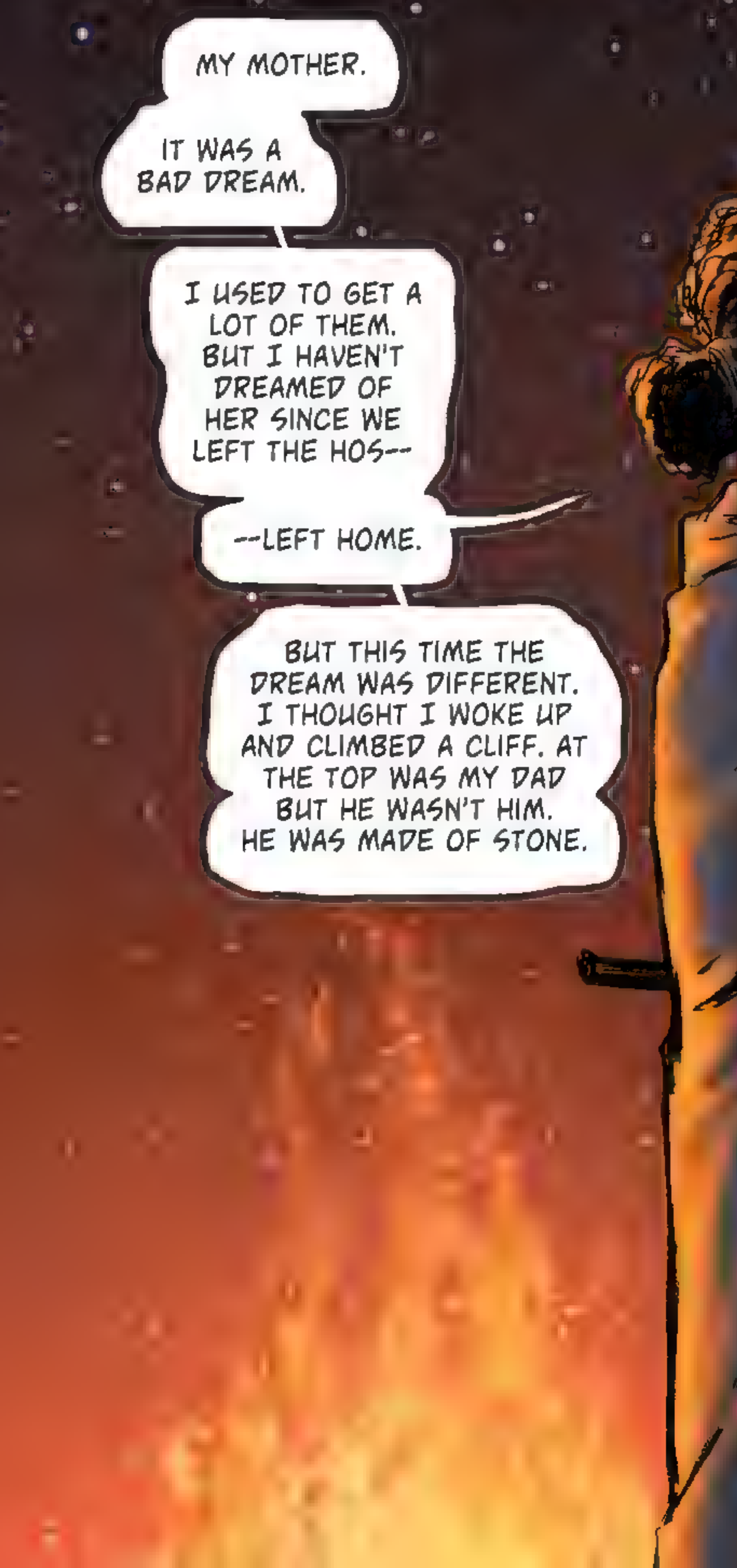


I AM LISTENING TO THE DESERT.

KEEPING WATCH.

THE FIRE IS BUT A WARNING. THERE ARE MANY THINGS IN THE DARKNESS THAT WOULD NOT BE STOPPED BY ITS GLOW.

WHAT WERE YOU DREAMING OF?



MY MOTHER.

IT WAS A BAD DREAM.

I USED TO GET A LOT OF THEM. BUT I HAVEN'T DREAMED OF HER SINCE WE LEFT THE HOS--

--LEFT HOME.

BUT THIS TIME THE DREAM WAS DIFFERENT. I THOUGHT I WOKE UP AND CLIMBED A CLIFF. AT THE TOP WAS MY DAD BUT HE WASN'T HIM. HE WAS MADE OF STONE.



DREAMS ARE NEITHER GOOD NOR BAD.

THEY MAY NOT ALL BE PLEASING, BUT THEY ARE THE SPIRITS WITHOUT BODIES TRYING TO SPEAK WITH US.

THEY SHOULD ALWAYS BE LISTENED TO.

THEY ARE ANOTHER WAY TO KNOW THE WORLD.

YOUR FATHER WAS MADE OF STONE? WHAT OF YOUR MOTHER? WAS SHE FLESH? DID SHE SPEAK TO YOU? DID HE SPEAK TO YOU?



SHE CALLS OUT TO ME
AS SHE GETS FARTHER
AWAY.

SHE'S
REACHING OUT
HER HAND
FOR ME.

DO YOU TRY TO
TAKE HER HAND?
WHAT DO YOU
SAY TO HER?

I DON'T SAY
ANYTHING.
I USUALLY WAKE UP.
IT'S SCARY.

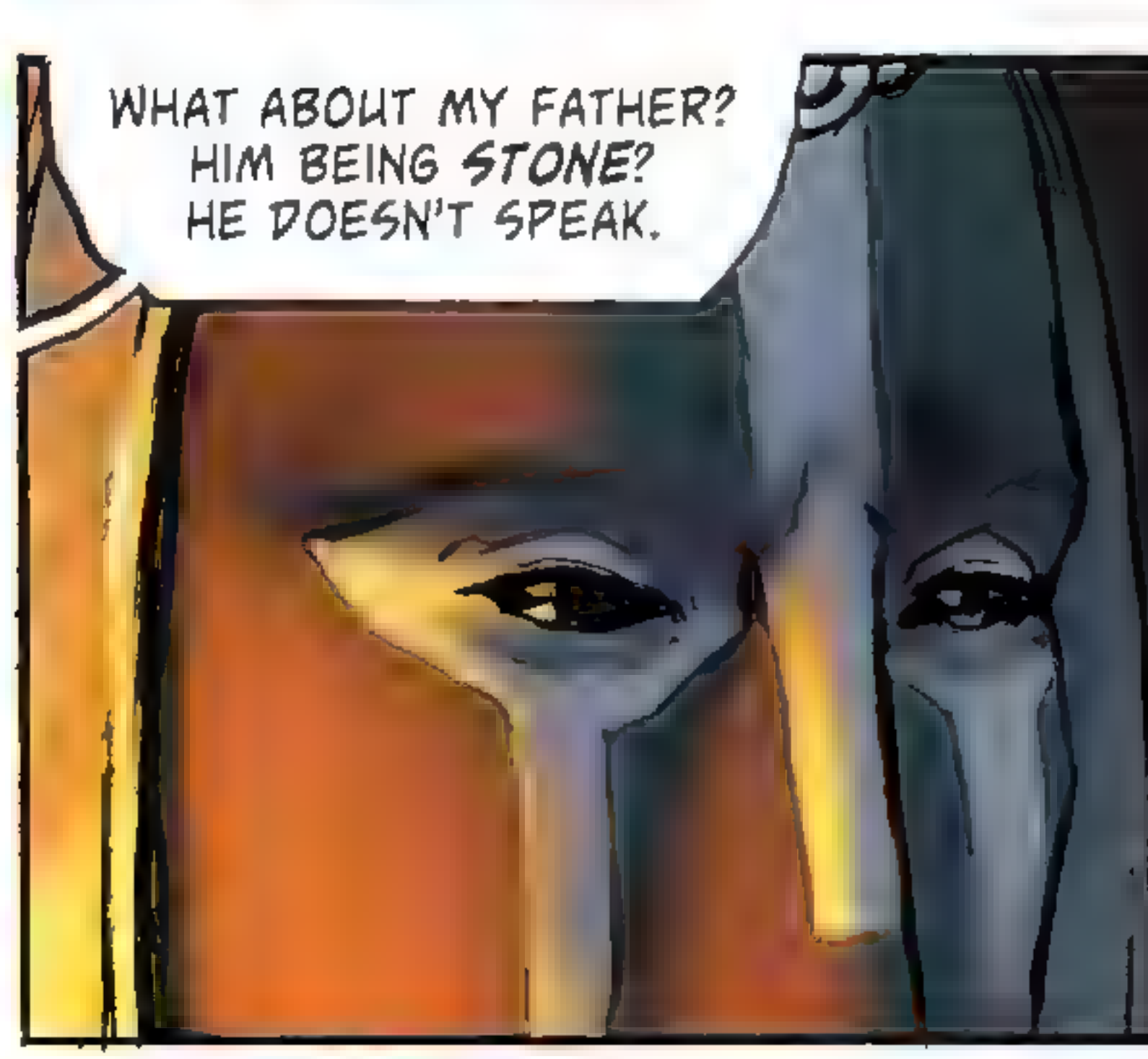
I NEVER TRIED TO TAKE
HER HAND. HER EYES
GLOW AND SHE'S ON FIRE.
I WAS ALWAYS AFRAID. I
DON'T KNOW WHY.

FIRE IS COMPLICATED.
IT CAN SYMBOLIZE GREAT URGENCY
OR COMFORT. LIKE OUR FIRE HERE. IT
IS WHAT SEPARATES US FROM THE
ANIMALS AND THE DARK. IT NEED NOT
BE FRIGHTENING. NEVERTHELESS, IT
IS A STRONG IMAGE. I THINK HER
SPIRIT NEEDS YOUR HELP OR
WANTS TO HELP YOU.



SHE DOES ASK
FOR HELP. BUT IF
SHE'S DEAD, HOW
CAN SHE HELP
ME OR I HELP
HER?

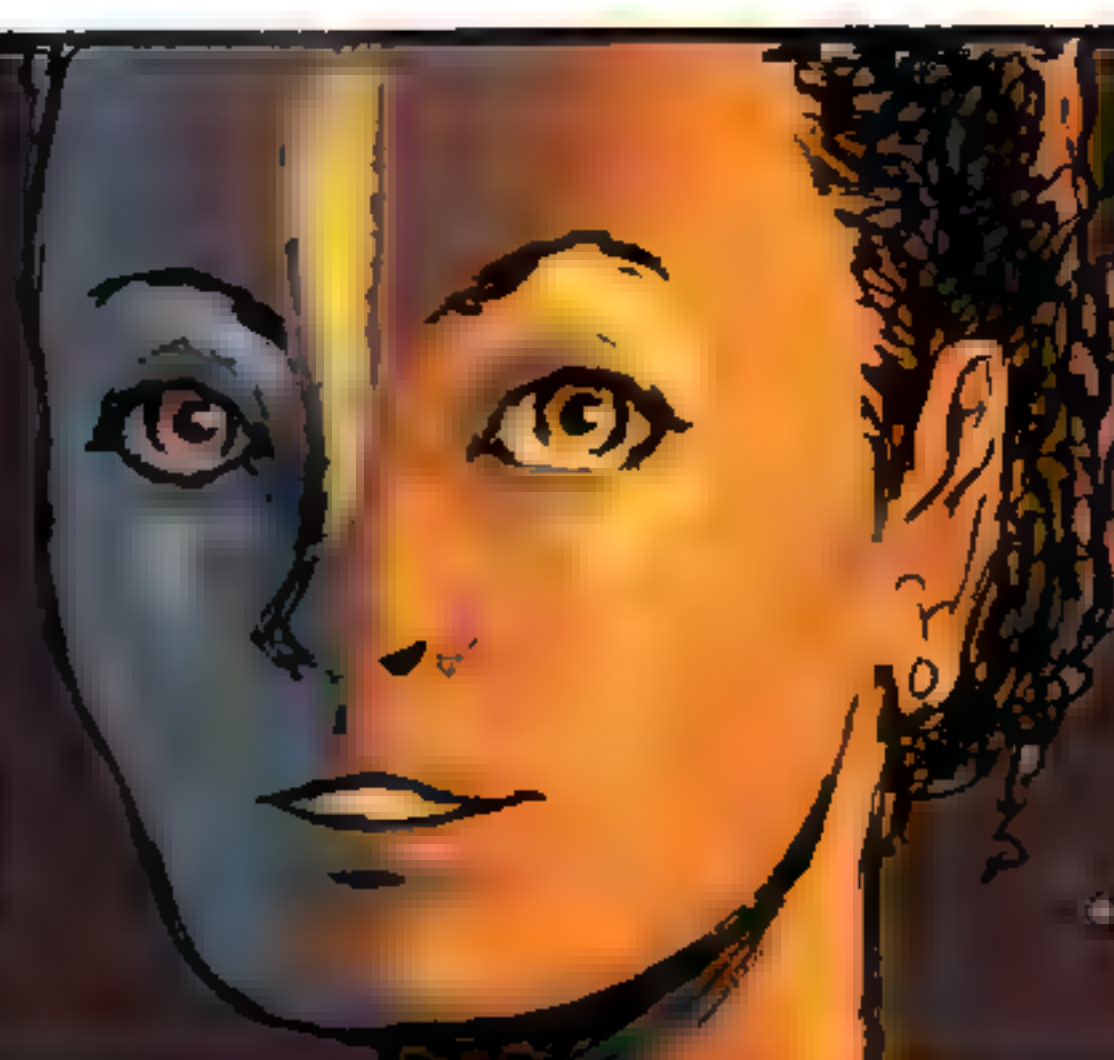
WHEN SHE
COMES TO
YOU AGAIN,
ASK HER.
SPIRITS CAN
SPEAK.



WHAT ABOUT MY FATHER?
HIM BEING **STONE**?
HE DOESN'T SPEAK.

YOUR FATHER IS A
HARD MAN. HIS SPIRIT
IS MUCH LIKE **STONE**.

I HAVE KNOWN ONLY ONE
SPIRIT TO SOFTEN HIS.
YOUR MOTHER'S. PERHAPS
THE DREAM IS ABOUT HER
WANTING TO HELP YOU
FIND THE WAY TO HIS
SPIRIT?



YOU TALK A LOT
ABOUT SPIRITS.

ANIMAL SPIRITS,
DREAM SPIRITS AND
PEOPLE'S SPIRITS.

DO **VIRUSES** HAVE
SPIRITS?



I HAVE BEEN ALIVE
A LONG TIME. I DON'T
THINK ANYONE HAS EVER
ASKED ME THAT.

I WOULD SAY THEY DO.
THEY **ARE** LIVING
THINGS.

PERHAPS
VERY SMALL
SPIRITS.

WHY DO
YOU ASK?

A VIRUS IS WHAT
KILLED MY MOTHER.

BECAUSE OF A VIRUS
EVERYONE I KNOW IS
DEAD. I CAN'T GO HOME.
I'M ALONE.

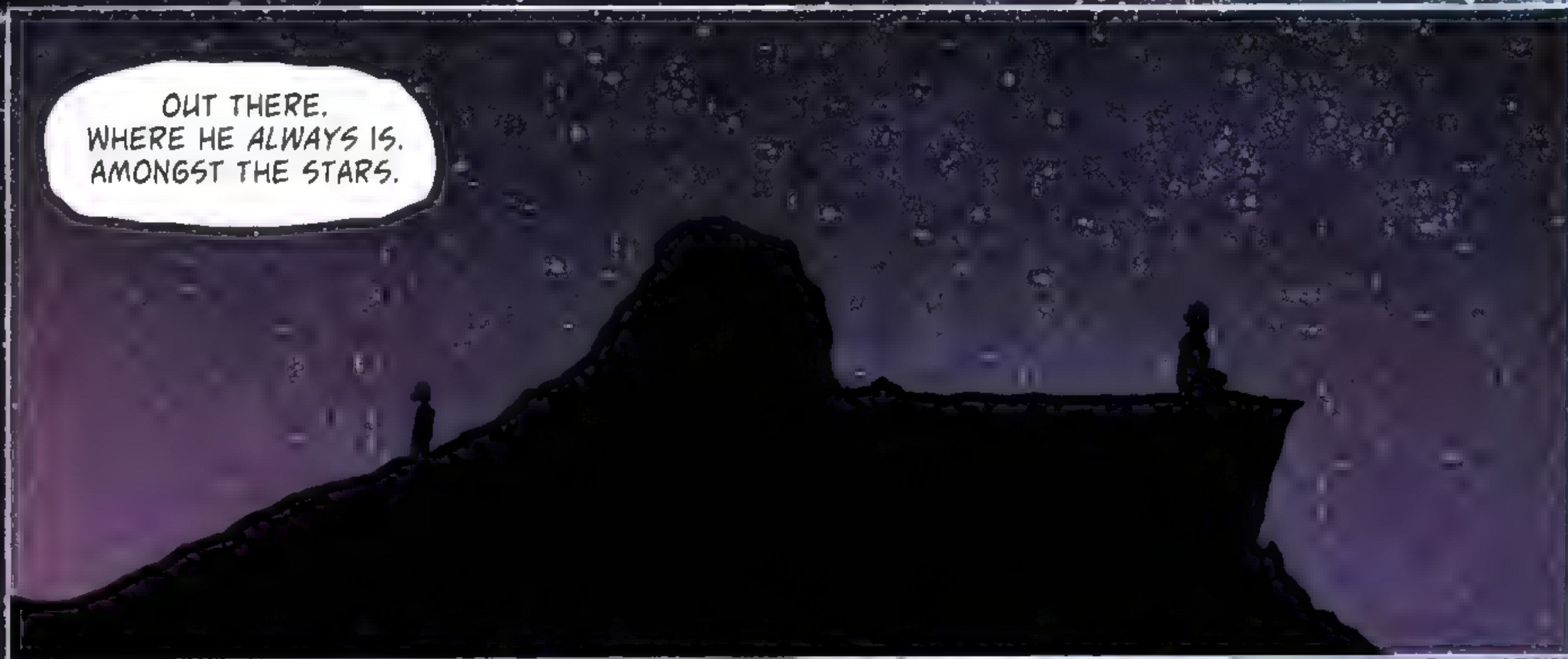
YOU ARE NOT **ALONE**.
YOU KNOW ME. I AM WITH YOU
HERE, **NOW**. YOUR MOTHER'S
SPIRIT IS WITH YOU.

AND WHAT OF YOUR FATHER?
HE IS WITH YOU.

I DON'T KNOW.
I STILL FEEL ALONE
EVEN WITH HIM.

SOONER THAN SPEAKING TO YOUR
MOTHER'S SPIRIT IN A DREAM, YOU
NEED TO SPEAK TO HIM. GO TO HIM.
TELL HIM I SAID TO ASK HIM
WHY HE SITS ALONE.

WHERE
IS HE?



OUT THERE.
WHERE HE ALWAYS IS.
AMONGST THE STARS.



DAD?



TY?

WHAT
ARE YOU
DOING
UP?



WHEW.



NOM-TE-WAL-TE SAID TO
COME AND ASK YOU WHY
YOU SIT ALONE.

HMF.

SLY.

HE HAS ASKED ME
THAT MANY TIMES.

THE *FIRST* TIME HE ASKED ME
THAT, I WAS JUST A BOY. I TOLD
HIM, "IT'S BECAUSE I LIKE THE
STARS. THEY'RE DIFFERENT ON
EVERY PLANET." THEN HE ASKED
ME ALL ABOUT THE OTHER
PLANETS I'D BEEN TO. I TOLD
HIM AND HE, IN TURN, TOLD
ME HIS STORIES.

WE PASSED *THAT* NIGHT AND MANY
OTHERS IN THAT WAY. NOT ALWAYS WITH
STORIES, SOMETIMES IN SILENCE...
HE NEVER LET ME SIT ALONE.

BUT HE HASN'T
ASKED ME THAT
IN A LONG TIME.

WHY?

BECAUSE OF
YOUR MOTHER.

AFTER I MET
HER I WASN'T
ALONE.

WHEN YOU CAME UP I WAS SURPRISED
YOU WEREN'T HIM. USUALLY HE WOULD
HAVE COME BY THIS HOUR.

HE WAS SITTING AND
TALKING WITH ME.

IT SEEMS THE CRAFTY
OLD MAN HAS FOUND A
WAY TO LET NEITHER OF
US SIT ALONE WITH OUR
THOUGHTS.

WHAT WERE YOU
TALKING ABOUT?

I HAD A DREAM
ABOUT MOM AND
IT WOKE ME UP.

HE SAID IT WAS HER
SPIRIT TRYING TO
TALK TO ME.

DO YOU
BELIEVE IN
SPIRITS?

YOU *HAVE*
BEEN TALKING
TO WAL-TE.

I *DO* BELIEVE,
BUT NOT IN THE
WAY HE DOES.

PEOPLE HAVE SPIRITS.
SOULS. BUT NOT ANIMALS.
OR TREES OR ROCKS. THE
DESERT IS THE DESERT. IT
DOESN'T THINK OR FEEL,
THE WAY A SENTIENT
BEING DOES.

WHAT ABOUT ANIMALS? LIKE TODAY WITH THE NAJ-SURI AND THE BRIDE.

ANIMALS HAVE INSTINCT.

THE SURI DOES NOT LAY DOWN FOR THE SPIRIT OF THE BRIDE.

THE TRUTH IS, IT IS A WISE HUNTER EXPLOITING A WEAKNESS IN BIOLOGY.

DESPITE HAVING FOUR EYES, THE SURI SEE ONLY LIMITED COLORS. SPECIFICALLY, THE TWO EYES ON THE TOP OF ITS HEAD SEE ONLY IN BLACK AND WHITE. THEY ARE KEEN DETECTORS OF LIGHT AND SHADOW AND HELP THE SURI SPOT PREY EXCEPTIONALLY WELL IN THE VAST DISTANCES OF THE DESERT.

BUT BECAUSE OF THOSE EYES THE DANCER CAN EXPLOIT A FLAW IN SURI EVOLUTION. SHE WEARS A RED CLOAK...WHICH TO THE LIMITED COLOR VISION OF THE NAJ-SURI BLENDS HER INTO THE DESERT.

SO, IT IS A SURPRISE WHEN SHE OPENS HER CLOAK. THE PATTERN IMMEDIATELY ATTRACTS THE SURI'S ATTENTION, BUT THE PRINT IS TOO BOLD, TOO MUCH LIGHT AND SHADOW. AS THE BRIDE DANCES IT OVERLOADS THE ANIMAL'S BRAIN AND TRIGGERS AN INSTINCT TO LAY DOWN AND BE STILL. IT MAY BE FROM CUB-HOOD WHEN IT WAS SMALL ENOUGH TO BE A MEAL FOR FLOCKS OF PREDATORY IJU-NI...AND LAYING STILL AND HIDING WOULD HAVE SAVED ITS LIFE...OR IT COULD JUST OVERLOAD ITS BRAIN WITH VISUAL STIMULI.

OH.

WHAT ABOUT THE CHANTING AND THE PRAYING?

A PRAYER FOR COURAGE AND NOT TO BE FOOLISH IS NEVER UNWISE BEFORE TAKING ON A WILD ANIMAL.

THOUGH OBSERVATION AND PREPARATION HAVE SPARED MORE LIVES THAN PRAYING.

THE CHANT IS MORE USEFUL AS RHYTHM FOR THE DANCER THAN IT IS TO SOOTHE AN ANIMAL WITH NO EAR FOR MUSIC AND CAN HEAR YOUR FOOTSTEPS A MILE AWAY.

SO WHAT NOM-TE-WAL-TE SAID ABOUT THE HEART OF THE WILD AND THE LESSONS OF THE SPIRIT WASN'T REAL?

FOR THE BRIDE IT IS. SHE LEARNS VALUABLE LESSONS IN PRACTICAL SKILLS AND OVERCOMING FEAR.

HER FAMILY LEARNS ABOUT HER. HER GROOM SEES WHAT SHE IS LIKE WHEN HER LIFE IS ON THE LINE. IT IS A TEST OF HER METTLE. HER SOUL.

AND TO BE WITH A WILD ANIMAL, A TOP PREDATOR LIKE THE NAJ-SURI IN THE WILD WITHOUT WEAPONS, ON ITS LEVEL... CHANGES YOU.

YOU'VE ONLY JUST BEGUN TO LEARN WHAT THIS LIFE IS REALLY LIKE. YOU'LL SEE.

WHAT ABOUT MOM'S HUNT, DID IT CHANGE HER?

OH YES,
IT DID.

BUT MORESO IT
CHANGED HOW
YOUR GRANDFATHER
TALDU SAW HER.

SHE HADN'T HUNTED BEFORE.
YET SHE WAS ADAMANT TO DO
THIS HUNT.

MY FATHER WAS **CONVINCED**
SHE WOULD FAIL. SHE WAS **TOO**
INEXPERIENCED. **TOO WEAK.**
HE EVEN BROUGHT A RIFLE
ALONG, SO CERTAIN THAT
HE'D NEED ONE.

IT WAS WHY SHE WANTED THIS HUNT.
TO **PROVE** TO HIM THAT SHE COULD
HUNT AND SUBDUCE AN ANIMAL
WITHOUT WEAPONS. THAT SHE WAS
TOUGH ENOUGH TO BE A KEL..
BUT IN HER OWN WAY.

TO SHOW HIM **HER SPIRIT.**
I TOLD HER WHAT I TOLD YOU.
IT WASN'T ABOUT SPIRIT BUT A
SIMPLE REACTION.

SHE SMILED AND ASSURED
ME I WAS WRONG.

WHEN THE HUNT FINALLY CAME,
SHE TRACKED A PARTICULARLY VICIOUS
NAJ-SURI. THE ANG-KIBUNI CALLED HIM
HANG-CLAW. HE HAD MAULED SEVERAL
BRIDES IN THE PAST. MOST WOMEN
STEERED CLEAR OF HIM AND FOUND
ANOTHER SURI...NOT **YOUR MOTHER.**

SHE DIDN'T SHY AWAY.
SHE SAID FATE HAD PUT
HIM ON HER TRACK FOR
A REASON.

I LOVED YOUR MOTHER AND
TRUSTED HER, BUT I WAS
PREPARING FOR A LIFE WITH
A ONE-EYED, NO-HANDED
HORRIBLY SCARRED WIFE.

SHE LED
HER HUNT.

SANG HER
CHANT AND DID
HER DANCE.

MY FATHER'S
HAND WAS ON
HIS RIFLE THE
WHOLE TIME.

WHEN IT WAS OVER AND
SHE LAID HER HANDS
ON THE HEAD OF
HANG-CLAW. MANY OF
THE ANG-KIBUNI MEN
WERE JEALOUS OF ME.

WHAT HAPPENED
NEXT COULD **ONLY**
HAPPEN TO YOUR
MOTHER.

I SAW MY FATHER RAISE
HIS RIFLE OUT OF THE
CORNER OF MY EYE.

HANG-CLAW WAS
GETTING UP TOO
EARLY.

YOUR MOTHER WAS STILL
KNEELING, BUT SHE KEPT
HER HEAD AND DIDN'T
JUMP UP.

YOUR
GRANDFATHER
DIDN'T SHOOT.

THE GREAT AND FEARED
HANG-CLAW...MAULER OF
BRIDES.... **LICKED** HER
FACE AND **NUZZLED** HER.

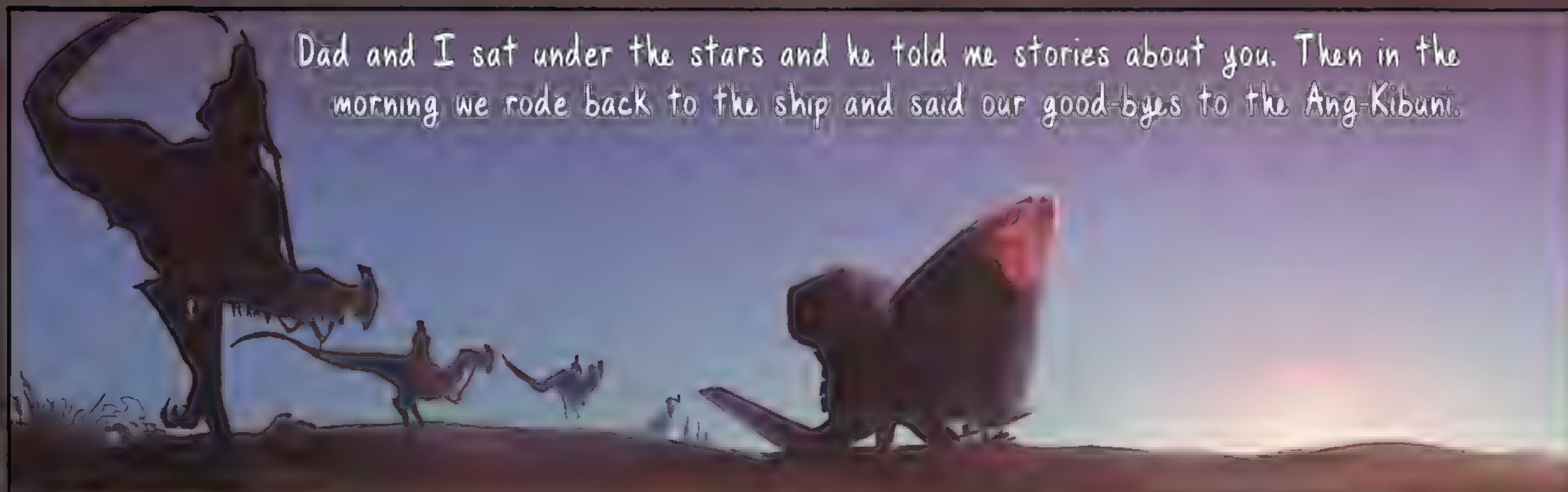
THEN HE WALKED AROUND HER
ONCE AND SIMPLY LEFT.

MY FATHER, THE GREAT AND
FEARED TALDU KEL, HOLSTERED
HIS RIFLE AND GOT DOWN OFF
HIS HA-RUH. HE TOOK THE REINS
OF HER HA-RUH, WALKED IT TO
HER, AND SILENTLY HANDED HER
THE REINS.

HE NEVER SAID A NEGATIVE
WORD ABOUT HER AGAIN.

I MISS
HER.

SO
DO I.



Dad and I sat under the stars and he told me stories about you. Then in the morning we rode back to the ship and said our good-byes to the Ang-Kibuni.



FOR YOU TO
REMEMBER
THE DESERT...

..AND THE SPIRIT OF
THE NAJ-SURI.

THANK
YOU.

Nom-Te-Wal-Te gave me
a carved naj-suri claw.



MAY YOU **BOTH** BE SAFE IN THE
DARKNESS BETWEEN THE STARS.

AND
REMEMBER
THERE IS
ALWAYS A
PIECE OF
HER HERE.

I wear it with your ring.

Dad has me monitoring
the fegdam. I look at
her all coiled up in her
cage. Her scales are
still dusty and she
hisses as she sleeps.

I wonder if she has a spirit like Nom-Te-Wal-Te
says, or just instinct like dad says. When she
wakes up she'll be on a strange planet and in
winter. Will she know we took her from her home?
Will she remember the desert and the wild?

Does she hate being confined as much as
I did when I was in quarantine? Does
she know she's in a cage?

Those seven-tailed crup kits from the
last run looked sad. Dad said they
weren't, but I really think they were.

Were they sad about just
being in their crates or did
they miss their mother too?

I don't know.

But I have to go now.
We're almost to Balhua
and Dad says I can pilot
for a while, and I really
want to do that.

Love,
Your Kel--
Ty.



BAL'PHREY.

I DIDN'T EXPECT
SUCH SNOW.

WINTER THIS
YEAR HAS BEEN
UNUSUALLY
HARSH.

DU'IHE WODK,
ABROS KEL.

WODK'PA
DU'IHUN.

YOUR FEGDAM
IS ABOARD.
DO YOU HAVE A
CREW TO
UNLOAD IT?

YES.

THERE IS A
CLIMATE REGULATED
TRANSFER POD
ON ITS WAY.

THEY'RE JUST
CLEARING THE
SNOW FROM THE
LOADING BAY.

WAS IT MUCH
TROUBLE?

HOW IS
SHE?

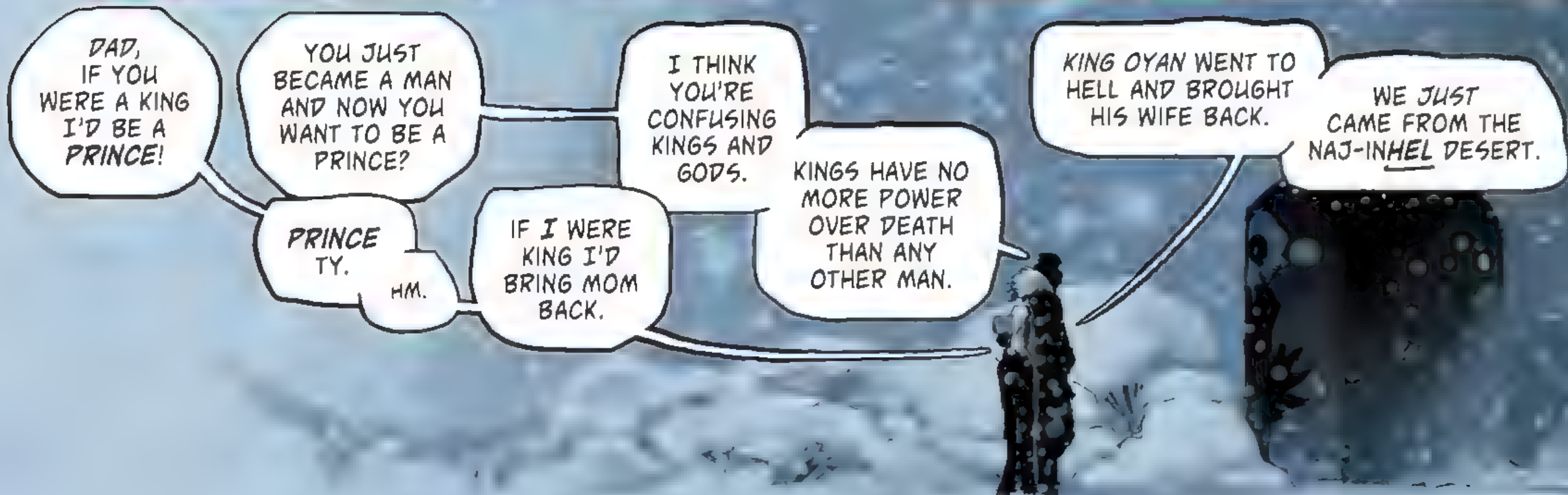
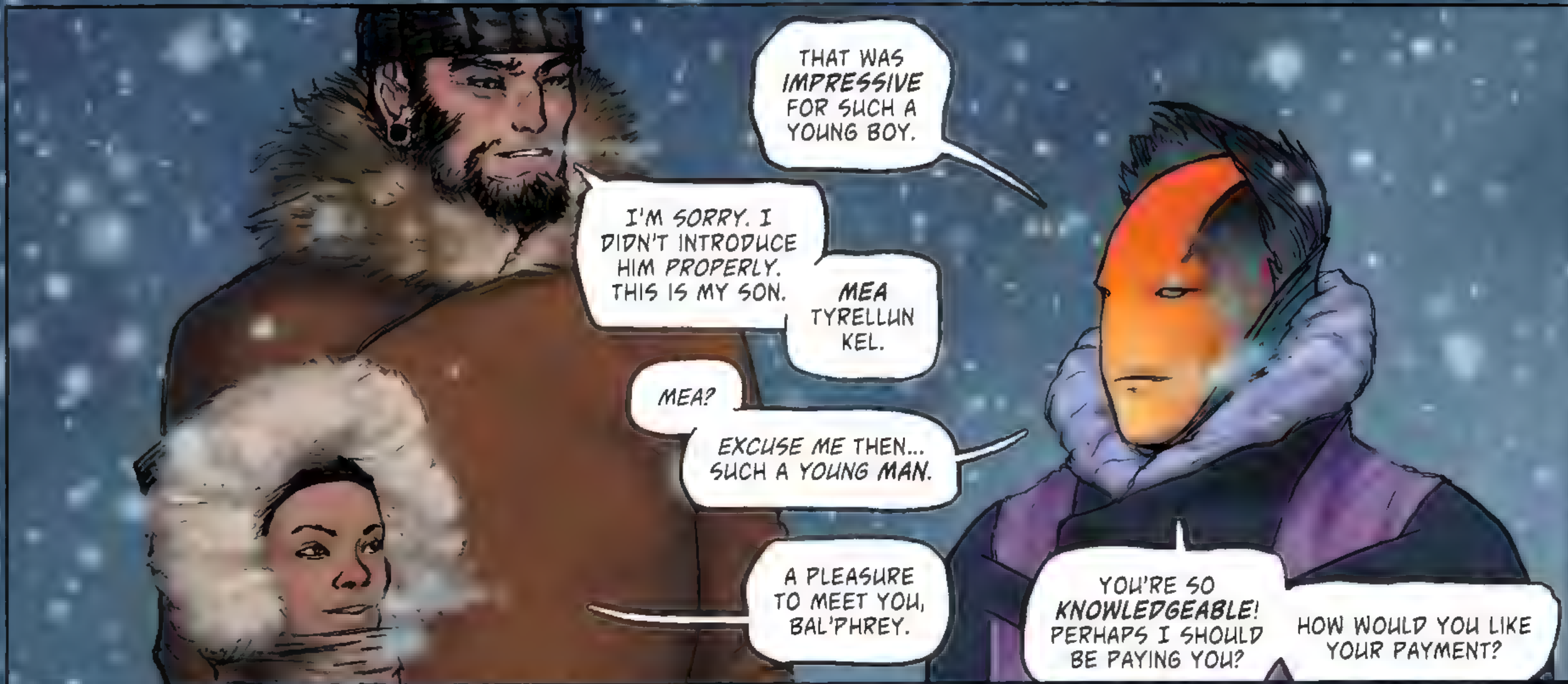
NO,
NOT MUCH
TROUBLE.

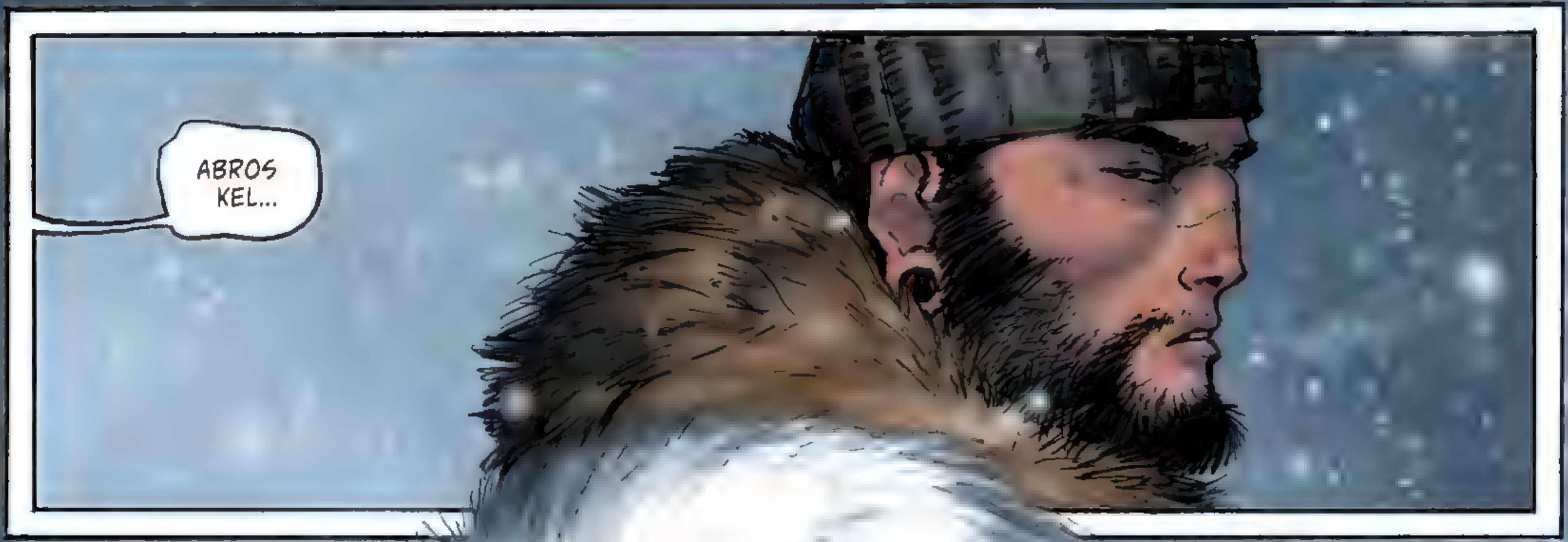
TY?

SHE'S
DOING
WELL.

SHE WAS BURROWED
BUT NOT NESTED.
SHE FED WITHIN THE
LAST WEEK OR SO.
WE CHECKED THE CASINGS,
HER LAST NEST LOOKED
TO BE ABOUT THREE
YEARS AGO.

SHE'S GOT
TWO FULL HUMPS
AND ONE HALF-HOLLOW.
A FOURTH IS BUDDING SO
SHE SHOULD BE READY
TO BREED AGAIN
WITHIN A YEAR.





ABROS
KEL...



FREEZE.

BBRRRRrrrrr...





THE

PETER STEIGERWALD'S

ZOOHUNTERS

#3

OF 6



COVER A



aspencomics.com



ASPE
COVER B



THE ZOOHUNTERS

ISSUE THREE

"TROUBLE CLEF"

WRITTEN BY PETER STEIGERWALD

CHARACTER DESIGN
BY PETER STEIGERWALD
COVER ART BY PETER STEIGERWALD

THE "WILDER-HIGH-KUJIE ALLIANCE" EDITION
WILDER, TAAJINGOBA, BALHUA

Dear Mom—
I met Minalara today,

she was pointing a
gun at us.

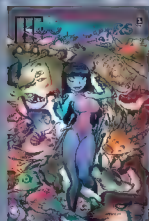
DON'T
SHOOT.

DON'T
HURT US.

MIN.



Peter Steigerwald



Chris Sanders
Peter Steigerwald



Peter Steigerwald

The ZooHunters Created by PETER STEIGERWALD

Character Design: Peter Steigerwald, Story: Peter Steigerwald, Art: Peter Steigerwald, Cover Art: Peter Steigerwald

We'd like to thank the following people for their support and encouragement: Mary R. King

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THE ZOOHUNTERS: A VISION

The ZooHunters is a comic book series created by Peter Steigerwald. The series is set in a world where humans and animals coexist. The story follows a group of hunters who are tasked with protecting the animals from a group of poachers. The series is currently being published by Fairbrook Comics.

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1555-1555-1555 1555-1555-1555 1555-1555-1555 1555-1555-1555 1555-1555-1555



RELAX
KID.

IT'S NOT
ARMED.

SEE?!...

..AND THE
SAFETY'S
ON.

IT'S THE
MIDDLE OF
WINTER HERE,
I COULDN'T
RESIST.

FREEZE?

WHO'S
THIS?

MY
SON.

MEA
TYRELLUN...TY.

TY. THIS IS
MEA--

MINALARA!
I KNOW!



~~But it was all right.~~
It turned out she
and dad are friends.
Did you know that?

NO MEA...
PLAIN MINALARA IS
JUST FINE.

WAIT.
HOW DO YOU
KNOW WHO
SHE IS?

SHE USED
TO BE A
FAMOUS
MUSICIAN.

MOM
LISTENED
TO HER
MUSIC.

USED TO?

IT'S ONLY BEEN
FIVE YEARS SINCE
MY LAST RELEASE...
ALREADY I'M A
'USED TO?'



IT'S MY DOG.
YOU CAN PET
IT-- IT'S
FRIENDLY.

WHAT'S
HIS NAME?

IT DOESN'T
HAVE ONE.
IT'S JUST
MY DOG.

WHAT'S
THIS?

THAT'S
NOT A
DOG.

TY, WHAT
DID I TEACH
YOU?

ALL UNKNOWN
ANIMALS CAN BE
LETHAL?



RELAX, ABROS.
IT'S BEEN WITH
ME FOR WEEKS.

MY DOG IS
HARMLESS.

AGAIN...

THAT'S
NOT A DOG.

WELL...
IT'S NOT A CAT.

She had a dog too.
It's not really
a dog and he doesn't
have a name...
but I like him a lot.



SEE?

DOG.

AND FRIENDLY.
LIKE I SAID.

THAT'S
FAR FROM
DEFINITIVE.

..AND YOU SAY
THAT LIKE THERE
ARE ONLY TWO
CHOICES FOR PETS.

WHERE DID IT
COME FROM?

I think we'll be friends.



I DON'T KNOW,
SOMEWHERE IN THE
OUTER RIM.

I RESCUED IT
FROM QAUREC.*

I RAN INTO HIM ON
POSPLAN C.P. IT WAS
HALF-DEAD AND HE
WAS TRYING TO FEED
IT TO A FIRROC.

IT'S T.C.D.
AND HEXADACKY
LIKE ME...

..RARE ENOUGH,
I MIGHT HAVE RESCUED
IT JUST FOR THAT... BUT
THEN IT LICKED ME, LIKE IT
WANTED ME TO SAVE IT.
IT WAS ALL TOO SAD AND
ADORABLE, I HAD TO TAKE IT.

FIRROCS
ONLY EAT
CAYWYRMS.

TAKE IT?
FOR HOW MUCH?
NOTHING IS EVER
FREE FROM THAT
ORANEAN.

WHAT'S
TEE-CEE-DEE AND
HEKSA-DAKEE?

TRANSCROMADERMIC.
IT MEANS A SKIN SHIFTER.
AN ANIMAL OR SENTIENT THAT
CAN CHANGE THE COLOR OR
PATTERN OF THEIR SKIN.
HEXADACKY IS HEXADACTYL,
SIX FINGERS OR TOES.

AGEE NOR. DS OF ASPEN 20th



HE DIDN'T
CHARGE ME
MONEY.

BUT IT
WASN'T
FREE.

HE WANTED
A FAVOR.

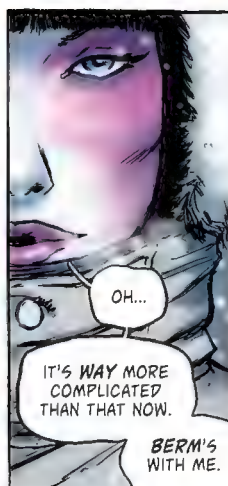
I'M SUPPOSED TO
BRING YOU TO HIM AND
GET YOU TO AGREE TO
WHATEVER SLIMY PLAN
HE HAS TO CONTRACT
YOU FOR.



SO THAT'S
WHY YOU'RE
HERE.

YOU KNOW
YOU'RE WASTING
YOUR TIME.

OF COURSE
I WON'T.



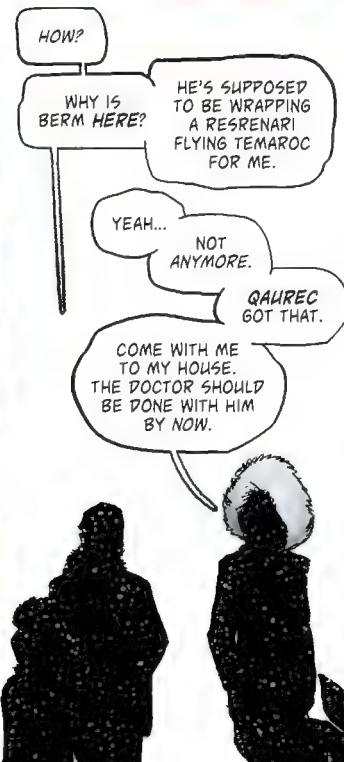
OH...

IT'S WAY MORE
COMPLICATED
THAN THAT NOW.

BERM'S
WITH ME.



UNCLE
BERM'S
HERE!?



HOW?

WHY IS
BERM HERE?

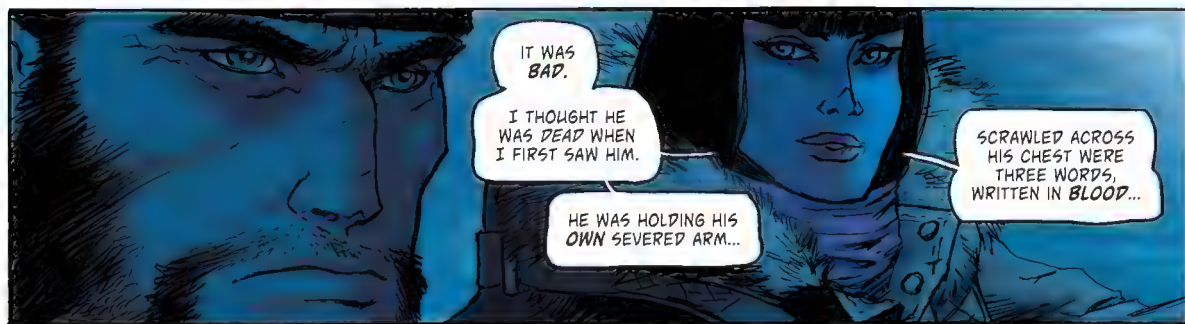
HE'S SUPPOSED
TO BE WRAPPING
A RESRENARI
FLYING TEMAROC
FOR ME.

YEAH...
NOT
ANYMORE.

QAUREC
GOT THAT.

COME WITH ME
TO MY HOUSE.
THE DOCTOR SHOULD
BE DONE WITH HIM
BY NOW.



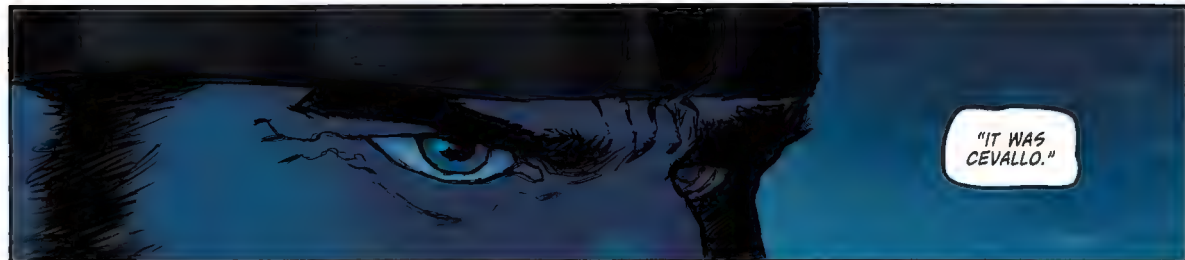


IT WAS
BAD.

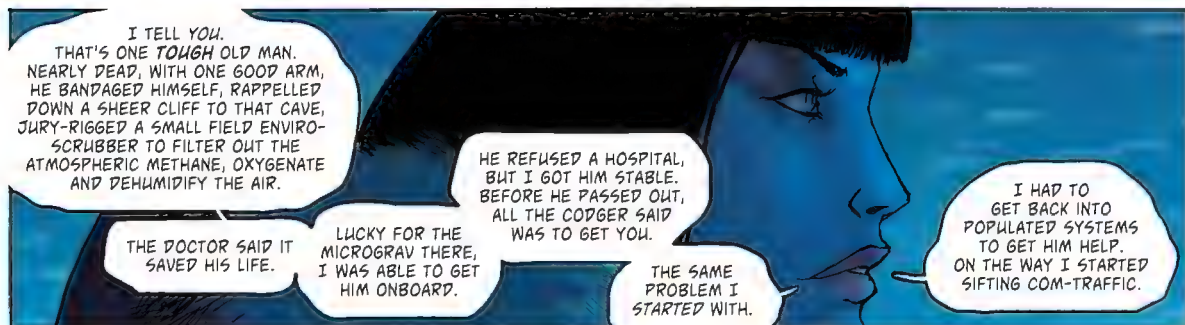
I THOUGHT HE
WAS DEAD WHEN
I FIRST SAW HIM.

HE WAS HOLDING HIS
OWN SEVERED ARM...

SCRAWLED ACROSS
HIS CHEST WERE
THREE WORDS,
WRITTEN IN **BLOOD...**



"IT WAS
CEVALLO."



I TELL YOU.
THAT'S ONE **TOUGH** OLD MAN.
NEARLY DEAD, WITH ONE GOOD ARM,
HE BANDAGED HIMSELF, RAPPELLED
DOWN A SHEER CLIFF TO THAT CAVE,
JURY-RIGGED A SMALL FIELD ENVIRO-
SCRUBBER TO FILTER OUT THE
ATMOSPHERIC METHANE, OXYGENATE
AND DEHUMIDIFY THE AIR.

THE DOCTOR SAID IT
SAVED HIS LIFE.

LUCKY FOR THE
MICROGRAV THERE,
I WAS ABLE TO GET
HIM ONBOARD.

HE REFUSED A HOSPITAL,
BUT I GOT HIM STABLE.
BEFORE HE PASSED OUT,
ALL THE CODGER SAID
WAS TO GET YOU.

THE SAME
PROBLEM I
STARTED WITH.

I HAD TO
GET BACK INTO
POPULATED SYSTEMS
TO GET HIM HELP.
ON THE WAY I STARTED
SIFTING COM-TRAFFIC.



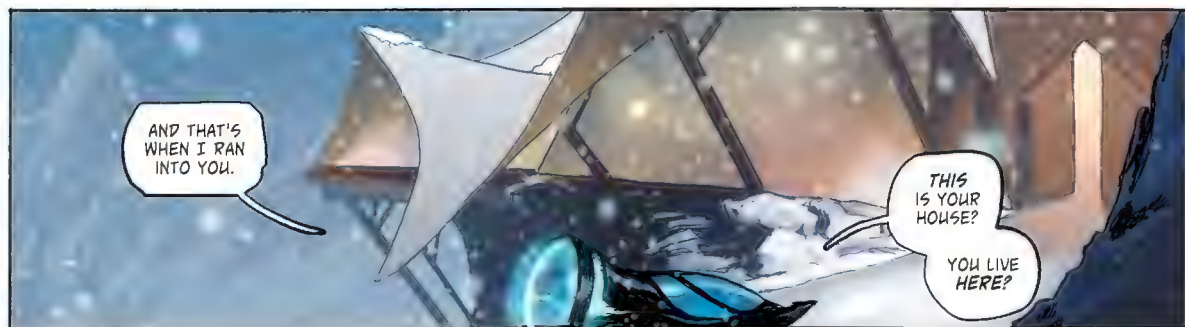
IT TOOK A WHILE, BUT I FINALLY
EAVESDROPPED ON A BACKCAST
CALL BETWEEN GHULO AND AWGHD!--
THOSE TWO SIMPLETONS ON
QAUREC'S WAUVAKA CREW.

THEY WERE GRUMBLING ABOUT A
CANCELLED JOB FOR A FEG FOR PHREY.
NO REORDER JOB WAS OPENED ON THE
WIRES AND BANHUK'S MARKETERS WERE
STILL PROMOTING THE NEW EXHIBIT
FOR SPRING.

WHEN I DELIVERED
TO FERUHAN A YEAR AGO,
HE DROPPED YOUR NAME
WHEN I COMPLIMENTED
HIS FEGS.

IT WAS A CRAZY WILD GUESS
THAT YOU SNAGGED THE JOB,
BUT SINCE I HAVE A HOUSE
HERE AND KNOW WALOPK...
I KNEW I COULD GET BERM
RELIABLE HELP HERE.

I GOT A DOCTOR
IN TO SEE BERM AND
STAKED OUT THE ZOO
TO SEE WHO DROPPED
OFF THE FEG.



AND THAT'S
WHEN I RAN
INTO YOU.

THIS
IS YOUR
HOUSE?

YOU LIVE
HERE?



I DON'T.

I USED TO BE FAMOUS.
I HAVE FIFTEEN HOMES
ON TWELVE DIFFERENT
PLANETS.

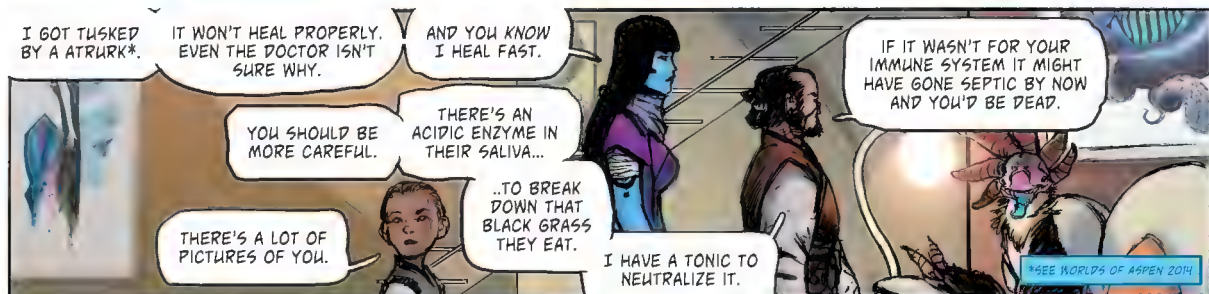
WOW. YOU'RE RICH.

WHY DO YOU DO
THIS THEN?

I GET BORED
EASILY.

BEING A ZOOHUNTER IS
THE MOST THRILLING,
INTERESTING THING I'VE
FOUND SO FAR.

WHAT HAPPENED TO
YOUR SHOULDER?



I GOT TUSKED
BY A ATRURK*.

IT WON'T HEAL PROPERLY.
EVEN THE DOCTOR ISN'T
SURE WHY.

AND YOU KNOW
I HEAL FAST.

YOU SHOULD BE
MORE CAREFUL.

THERE'S AN
ACIDIC ENZYME IN
THEIR SALIVA...

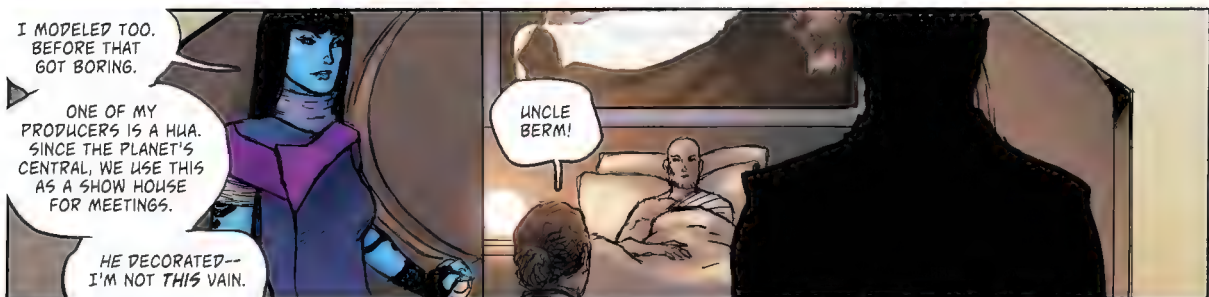
...TO BREAK
DOWN THAT
BLACK GRASS
THEY EAT.

THERE'S A LOT OF
PICTURES OF YOU.

I HAVE A TONIC TO
NEUTRALIZE IT.

IF IT WASN'T FOR YOUR
IMMUNE SYSTEM IT MIGHT
HAVE GONE SEPTIC BY NOW
AND YOU'D BE DEAD.

*SEE WORLD'S OF ASPEN 2014

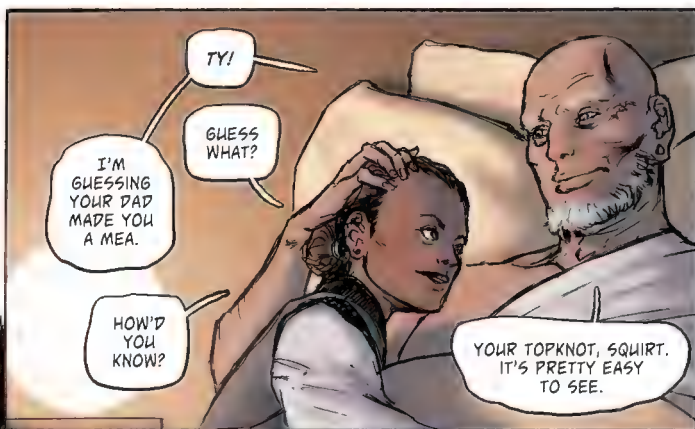


I MODELED TOO.
BEFORE THAT
GOT BORING.

ONE OF MY
PRODUCERS IS A HUA.
SINCE THE PLANET'S
CENTRAL, WE USE THIS
AS A SHOW HOUSE
FOR MEETINGS.

HE DECORATED--
I'M NOT THIS VAIN.

UNCLE
BERM!



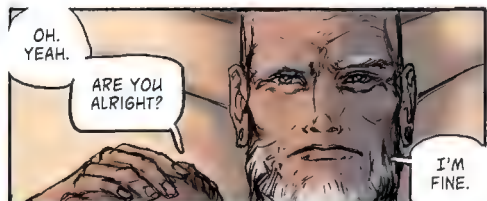
TY!

GUESS
WHAT?

I'M
GUESSING
YOUR DAD
MADE YOU
A MEA.

HOW'D
YOU
KNOW?

YOUR TOPKNOT, SQUIRT.
IT'S PRETTY EASY
TO SEE.



OH.
YEAH.

ARE YOU
ALRIGHT?

I'M
FINE.



DOCTOR HUA'YUJAJI,
THIS IS ABROS.

DU'IHE WOPK,
KADO HUA'YUJAJI.

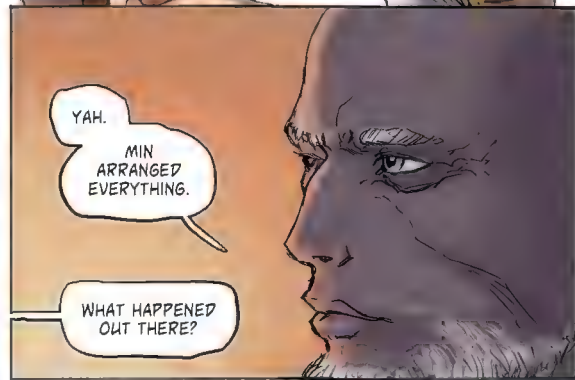
WOPK'PA
DU'IHUN.

HE'S BEEN
ASKING FOR YOU.
ARE YOU FAMILY?
HIS BROTHER?

HE IS A FRIEND
OF MY FATHER.
I'VE KNOWN HIM
ALL MY LIFE.

WHAT'S HIS
PROGNOSIS?

HE WAS
EXTREMELY
LUCKY.





MUTINY.

PLAIN AND SIMPLE.

I WAS RANGING...
DOING THE FINAL ENVIRO
SURVEYS...WHEN I GOT BACK,
CEVALLO HAD KILLED BAPOK
AND SAPANWEN, ASSUMED
COMMAND, AND BOXED THE
TARGET TEMAROC.

HIS BROTHER
IFIZ HAD SHOWN UP,
SO I KNEW HE WAS
DELIVERING FOR
QAUREC.

I OPENED UP A
NEGOTIATION...BUT
THAT SOURED.

THERE WAS
A FIGHT.

I NOTCHED
THREE OR
FOUR, AND
I THINK
I KILLED
HEIO.

CEV STUCK
THAT DAK KNIFE
OF HIS IN MY
SHOULDER AND
LEANED.

IT CUT THROUGH SUIT,
MEAT, AND BONE LIKE
WET HERROCK.

HE LEFT ME TO DIE.
TOOK MY BOAT AND HAULED OUT.

I'M
SORRY.



ARE YOU MAD
ABOUT WHAT I SAID?
THAT YOU USED TO
BE FAMOUS?

NO,
NOT
REALLY.

IT STUNG A BIT TO
HEAR IT SAID, BUT I
NEVER CARED MUCH
FOR THE FAME.

WHAT'RE THE
TATTOO SYMBOLS
ON YOUR ARMS?

THEY'RE
MELE SYMBOLS.
THE BIG ONE
IS A CLEF.

AND THEY'RE NOT
TATTOOS, THEY'RE
ACTUALLY FUSINGS.

WHAT'S A
CLEF?

A CLEF IS
A SIGN THAT TELLS
A MUSICIAN THE
TONE FOR THE
ENTIRE PIECE.

WHAT'S A
MELE?

THE MELE ARE AN
EXTINCT HEXADACKY
SPECIES.

I DISCOVERED THEM
WHEN I FIRST STARTED
PLAYING MUSIC...AND
SEARCHING FOR TWELVE
FINGERED COMPOSITIONS.
I IDENTIFIED WITH THEM.

WHAT ARE
FUSINGS?

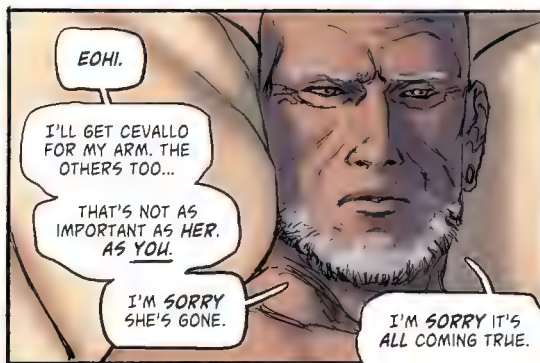
YOU ASK
A LOT OF
QUESTIONS.



SORRY
FOR WHAT?

I CREWED HIM.
YOUR ARM IS
MY FAULT.

NO.



EOHI.

I'LL GET CEVALLO
FOR MY ARM. THE
OTHERS TOO...

THAT'S NOT AS
IMPORTANT AS HER.
AS YOU.

I'M SORRY
SHE'S GONE.

I'M SORRY IT'S
ALL COMING TRUE.



I HADN'T TOLD YOU YET.

ABROS...

I'VE KNOWN YOU SINCE YOU WERE A SHADDLING. IT'S ALL OVER YOUR FACE-- AND YOU'RE A KEL. IT'S YOUR CURSE.

WE TRIED.

I KNOW.

SHE AND I.

WE DID EVERYTHING WE COULD.

EVERYTHING WE COULD THINK OF. NO MATTER HOW HARD IT WAS TO BE APART.

YOU STOLE TEN YEARS.

TY IS A FINE, STRONG, SMART BOY.



TEN YEARS OF A HALF-LIFE.

WAS IT WORTH IT?

HERE WE STILL ARE.

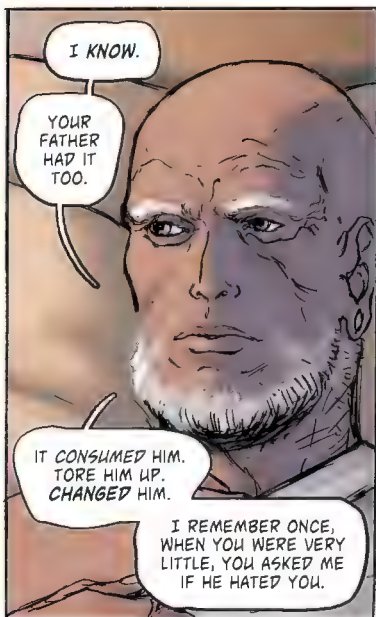
MY WIFE, MY LOVE, IS GONE.

NO BODY TO BURY...

..NOT EVEN ASHES. I NEVER GOT TO SAY GOODBYE.



THERE'S A HOLE INSIDE OF ME.



I KNOW.

YOUR FATHER HAD IT TOO.

IT CONSUMED HIM. TORE HIM UP. CHANGED HIM.

I REMEMBER ONCE, WHEN YOU WERE VERY LITTLE, YOU ASKED ME IF HE HATED YOU.

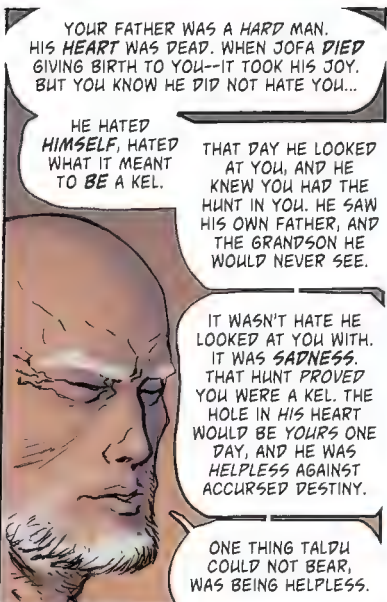


I THOUGHT HE DID.

I REMEMBER THAT DAY. I HUNTED AND CAPTURED SIX JAPILU GLIDERS...ON MY OWN. I WAS BARELY FIVE. I THOUGHT HE WOULD BE SO PROUD OF ME.

HE JUST STARED AT ME. HIS FACE HAD AN EXPRESSION THAT I COULDN'T DEFINE. IT FRIGHTENED ME THEN.

BUT I AM BEGINNING TO UNDERSTAND IT NOW.



YOUR FATHER WAS A HARD MAN. HIS HEART WAS DEAD. WHEN JOFA DIED GIVING BIRTH TO YOU--IT TOOK HIS JOY. BUT YOU KNOW HE DID NOT HATE YOU...

HE HATED HIMSELF, HATED WHAT IT MEANT TO BE A KEL.

THAT DAY HE LOOKED AT YOU, AND HE KNEW YOU HAD THE HUNT IN YOU. HE SAW HIS OWN FATHER, AND THE GRANDSON HE WOULD NEVER SEE.

IT WASN'T HATE HE LOOKED AT YOU WITH. IT WAS SADNESS. THAT HUNT PROVED YOU WERE A KEL. THE HOLE IN HIS HEART WOULD BE YOURS ONE DAY, AND HE WAS HELPLESS AGAINST ACCURSED DESTINY.

ONE THING TALDU COULD NOT BEAR, WAS BEING HELPLESS.



BUT HE WAS WRONG.

HE CHOSE TO BE HELPLESS. TO SURRENDER TO FATE.

YOU ARE NOT HELPLESS. THERE IS STILL A CHANCE FOR TY TO BE THE CHANGE YOU NAMED HIM TO BE.

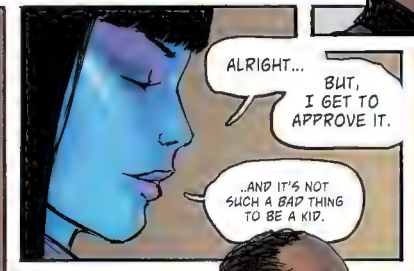
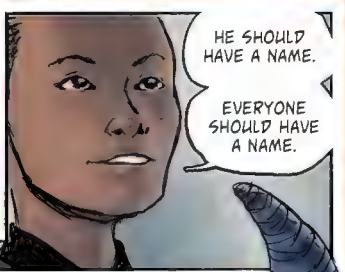
ONE CHANCE.

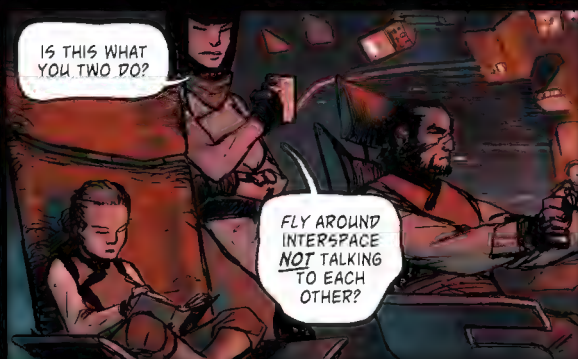
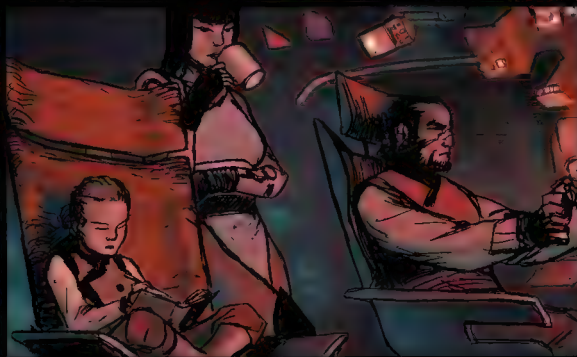
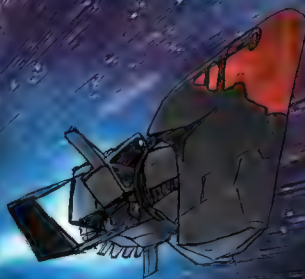
BECAUSE OF HER.

DO NOT LET EOHIE DIE WITHIN HIM.

OR YOU.

IT'S YOUR CHOICE.



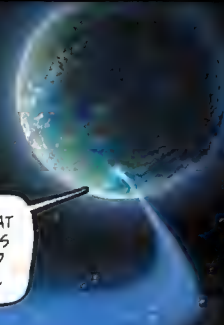


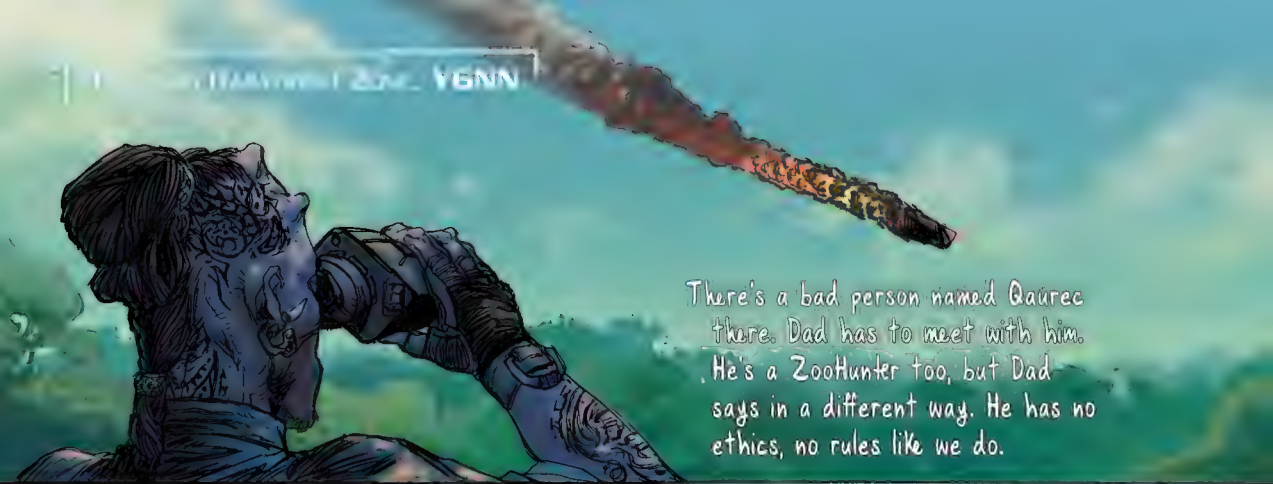
We left Uncle Berm on Balhua and are headed for Ygnn. It's a protected and totally wild planet, and almost uninhabited.

Its name means Paradise in Haottallo. The planet is sacred to the Haottallin because they believe their gods live there, a species of giant *ael* people called the Oolin.

WE DO THIS STRAIGHT FORWARD.

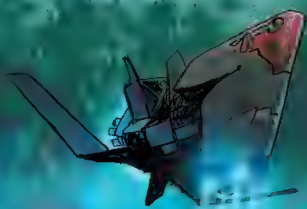
I'LL SET DOWN AT THE EDGE OF HIS PERIMETER AND WE'LL GEAR UP.





There's a bad person named Gaurec there. Dad has to meet with him. He's a ZooHunter too, but Dad says in a different way. He has no ethics, no rules like we do.

Dad won't say why he's so bad, just that they have history. I don't know what he means by that.



Minalara says he's scum. He doesn't care about animals or people. Just money and power and secrets, and the people who work with him are just as bad.

Dad wouldn't let her say more.



MIN.
ARE YOU
READY?

YEAH.

TY, YOU
STAY
HERE.

YOU THINK
YOU GOT
ENOUGH
WEAPONS?

I'm scared.

But I'm not
going to show it.

Like you used to say...

I'll take my fear and turn it into
trust for him and do as he says.

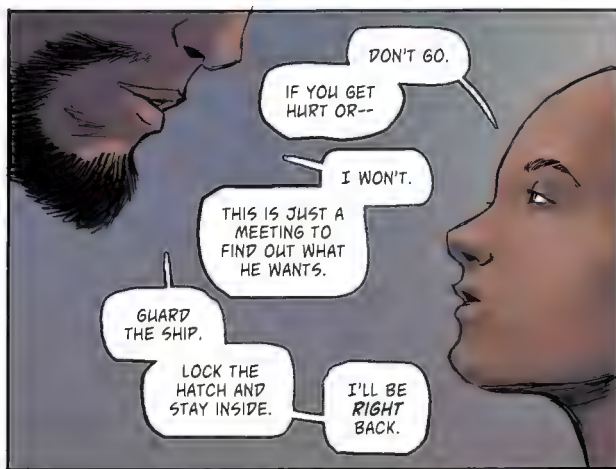
He'll keep me safe.



NO.

TY, WHY
DO WE ARM
OURSELVES?

WE CARRY
WEAPONS AS
PROTECTION
AGAINST
DROP SNAKES.



DON'T GO.

IF YOU GET
HURT OR--

I WON'T.

THIS IS JUST A
MEETING TO
FIND OUT WHAT
HE WANTS.

GUARD
THE SHIP.

LOCK THE
HATCH AND
STAY INSIDE.

I'LL BE
RIGHT
BACK.



ooo?

STAY.

GUARD
THE KID.

rvad!



YOU SEE CEVALLO... HE'S MINE.

HOW'S THE SHOULDER?

GOOD.

IT'S VIRGIN WILDERNESS OUT THERE.

SALVE WORKED. IT'S HEALING ALREADY.

I CAN HANDLE THE GUN.

THERE'S MORE DANGER THAN JUST QAUREC.

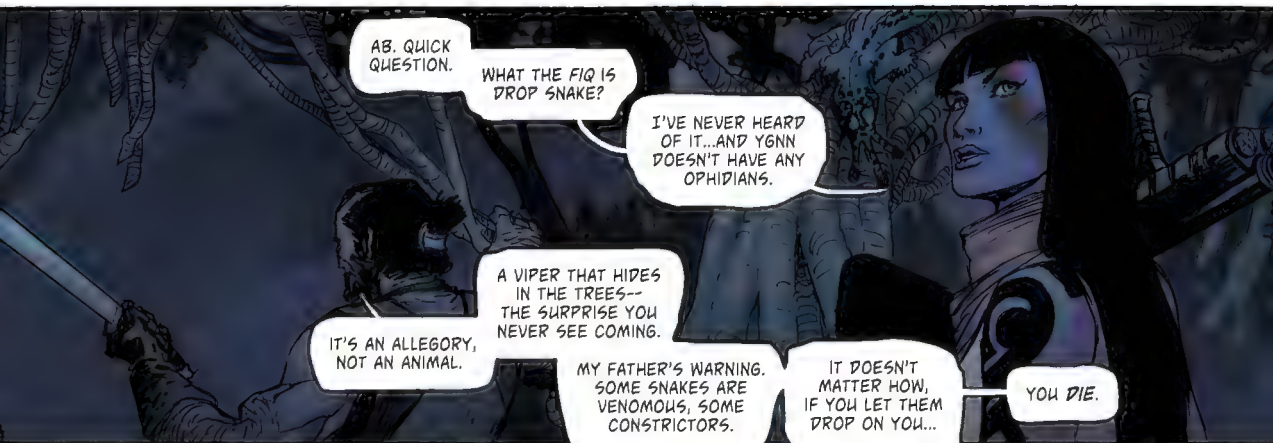
He keeps us all safe.

Even if he can't be with us.

MAKE SURE IT DOESN'T PEE ON MY STUFF.

ME?

NOT YOU KID, THE DOG.



AB. QUICK QUESTION.

WHAT THE FIQ IS DROP SNAKE?

I'VE NEVER HEARD OF IT...AND YGNN DOESN'T HAVE ANY OPHIDIANS.

A VIPER THAT HIDES IN THE TREES-- THE SURPRISE YOU NEVER SEE COMING.

IT'S AN ALLEGORY, NOT AN ANIMAL.

MY FATHER'S WARNING. SOME SNAKES ARE VENOMOUS, SOME CONSTRICTORS.

IT DOESN'T MATTER HOW, IF YOU LET THEM DROP ON YOU...

YOU DIE.



THERE HE IS.

HOW MANY DO YOU COUNT?



ELEVEN.

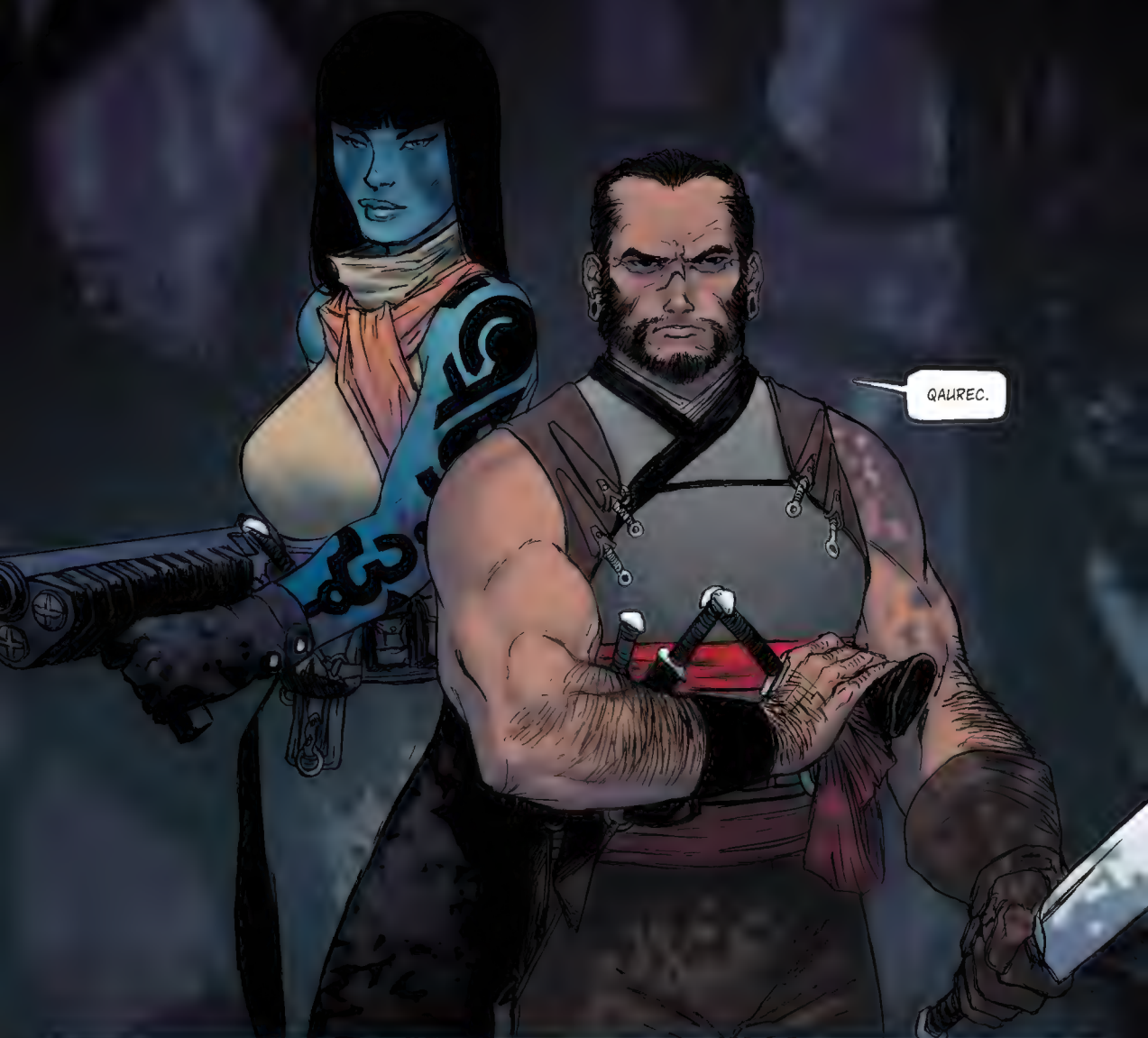
DJAK AND FORU CAN'T HIDE WORTH...

THAT'S THIRTEEN WITH QAUREC AND KHOTOHK.

OH, IT'S A TRAP ALRIGHT.

NOW WHAT?

WE SAY HELLO.





HE BROUGHT
TY.

WHO?

HIS
SON.

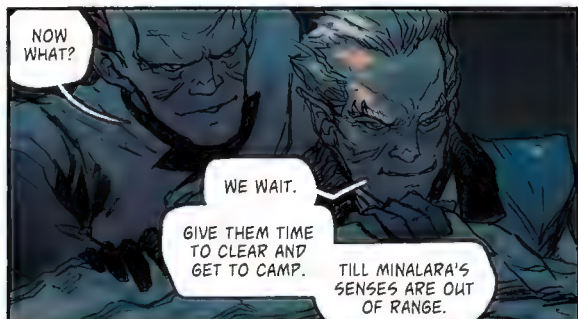
I DON'T SEE
HIS WIFE.
SHE'S EITHER
SICK OR DEAD.

DEAD
PROBABLY,
IF HIS SON IS
WITH HIM.

MAKE SURE IT
DOESN'T PEE ON
MY STUFF.

ME?

NOT YOU KID
THE DOG



NOW
WHAT?

WE WAIT.

GIVE THEM TIME
TO CLEAR AND
GET TO CAMP.

TILL MINALARA'S
SENSES ARE OUT
OF RANGE.



It is hard to be strong alone...but to be
a Kel means we must be strong alone.



THEN WE APPROACH
FROM THE REAR...
AVOIDING THE VIEW
FROM THE WINDOWS.



HOW DO WE
GET INTO THE
HATCH?

LEAVE THAT
TO ME.



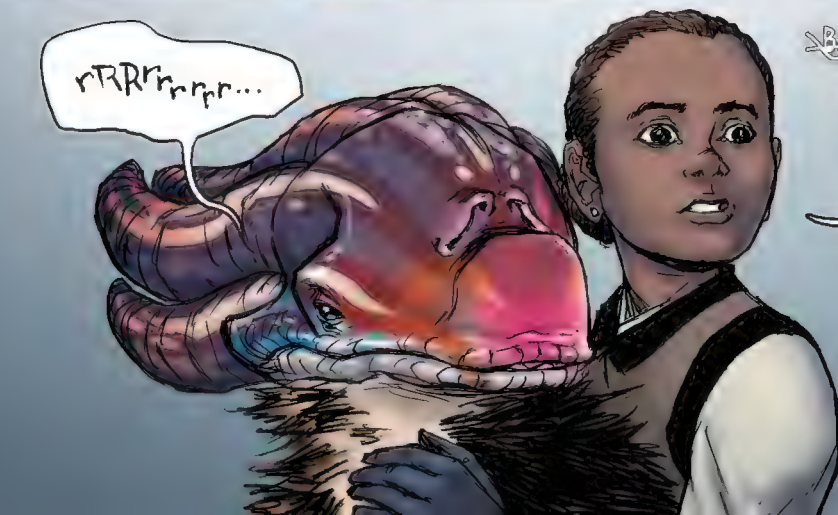
Rroo?

I will be
strong.



TY!

QUICK!
OPEN THE
HATCH!
MINALARA'S
BEEN SHOT!



rTRRRrrrr...

~~Because we are~~

Because we are strong.

DAD?

Your Kels.



I KEPT
MY WORD.

I BROUGHT
HIM.

WHAT DO
YOU WANT
FROM ME?



NEARLY, DEAR
MINALARA...

YOU ALSO
PROMISED TO
GET HIM TO
AGREE TO MY
PROPOSAL.

A SIMPLE
DELIVERY
IS ALL,
ABROS.



THOSE
OOLIN?

I HEAR YOU'RE
QUITE ADEPT AS
A COURIER.

LATELY.



I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU
BRIBED TO GET PERMITS
TO TRAP A PROTOSENTIENT
SPECIES--IF YOU EVEN
HAVE PERMITS--BUT I
WON'T DO IT.

NO SENTIENT
LIFE.

EVER.

I'M NO
SLAVER.



NOT THEM.

I AM WELL
AWARE OF
YOUR MORAL
PROCLIVITIES.

I HAVE
SOMETHING ELSE.
SOMETHING ONLY
YOU CAN SHUTTLE.



THIS.

TAKE THIS TO
RAGOHOKKAN.

...AND YOUR
REWARD WILL BE
HANDSOME.



THAT'S IT?

ALL THIS
SUBTERFUGE
AND FAVOR
DEALING FOR
THAT?

YOU HAVE
SCORES OF
CREWS.
HAVE ONE OF
THEM DO IT.

HE CAN'T,
MIN.

RAGOHOKKAN IS A
CLOSED SOCIETY.

I AM ONE OF THE
FEW OUTSIDERS
THE MOGUNATE
TRUSTS.

WHAT'S
IN THE
CANISTER,
QAUREC?

BIO
CULTURES.

NOT MY
CONCERN.

I AM ONLY THE
PROCURER.

IT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE.
IF THEY CONTRACTED YOU
FOR IT, THEY MUST MAKE
SOME CONSIDERATION FOR
YOU TO DELIVER IT.

THEY
DID...

I PROMISED I
WOULD OBTAIN IT,
THEY STIPULATED
YOU DELIVER IT.

WHAT KIND OF
CULTURES?
WHY DO THEY
WANT IT?

YOU SHOULDN'T
HAVE PROMISED
MY INVOLVEMENT.

I **DON'T**
TRUST YOU.

I **DON'T** WORK
WITH YOU.

YOU'LL HAVE
TO RENEG ON
DELIVERY.

I **WON'T** DO IT.

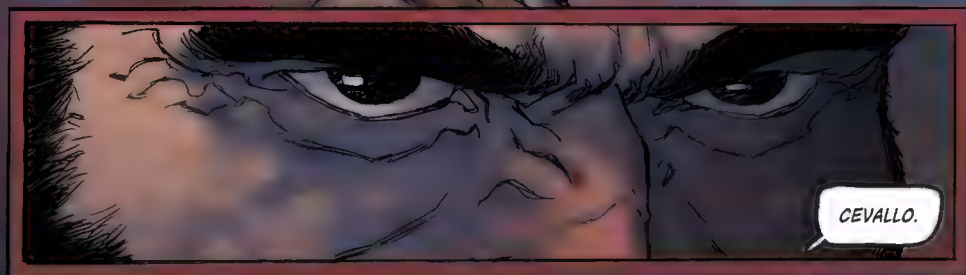
MINALARA...
PRETTY MINALARA...
LOOK BEHIND YOU.
CONVINCE HIM.



ABROS....



DROP
SNAKE.



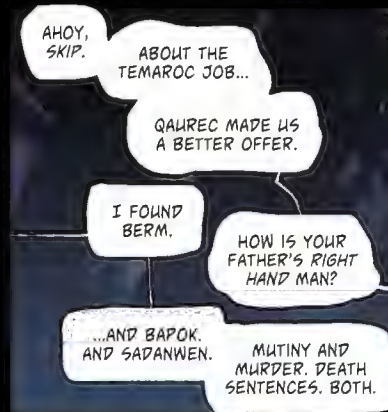
CEVALLO.



I WOULDN'T
ABROS...



LET
HIM GO.



AHOY,
SKIP.

ABOUT THE
TEMAROC JOB...

GAUREC MADE US
A BETTER OFFER.

I FOUND
BERM.

HOW IS YOUR
FATHER'S RIGHT
HAND MAN?

...AND BAPOK.
AND SADANWEN.

MUTINY AND
MURDER. DEATH
SENTENCES. BOTH.



NOT TODAY.

I WARNED YOU
NOT TO DRAW.

YOU'RE SURROUNDED.

...THE LAST MAN TO
POINT A GUN AT ME
LEFT SOMETHING ON
RESRENAR FOUR.



YOU DIE
FIRST.

IF I DO, SO DOES
YOUR BOY...AND YOU.

JUST LIKE YOUR
FATHER, ALONE ON
AN UNINHABITED
WORLD.

YOU SEE, I'VE INJECTED
TY WITH A SAMPLE OF
WHAT'S IN THAT CANISTER.

THE ONLY
ANTIDOTE IS ON
RAGOHOKKAN.

YOU KILL ME.
THEY KILL YOU.

...AND
YOUR
BOY?
HE DIES A SLOW,
AGONIZING DEATH.
ALONE, HERE ON YGNN.
UNMOURNED.
UNMARKED.

OR.

YOU MAKE THE
DELIVERY FOR
GAUREC AND
SAVE HIM.

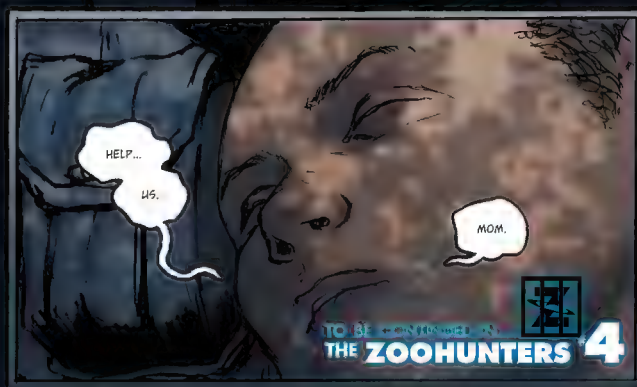
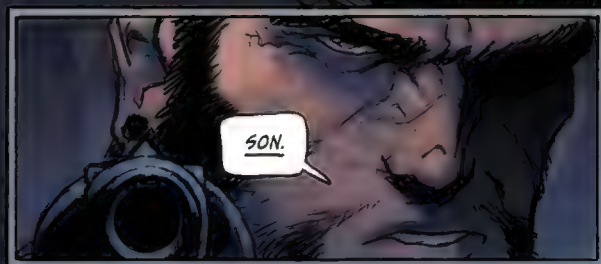
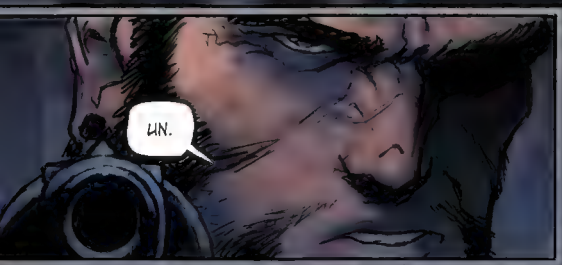
IT'S YOUR
CHOICE.

ONE.

LAST.

TIME.

CEVALLO...





THE

PETER STEIGERWALD'S

ZOOHUNTERS

#4

OF 6



COVER A



THE LOOHUNTERS

PETER STEIGERWALD'S

#4
OF 6



COVER B



THE ZOOHUNTERS

ISSUE FOUR

"INNERMISSION"

story & art PETER STEIGERWALD

Journal font by JOSH REED

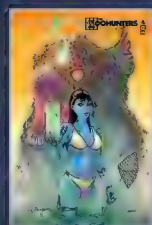
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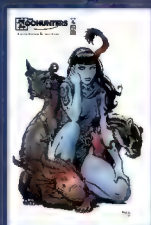
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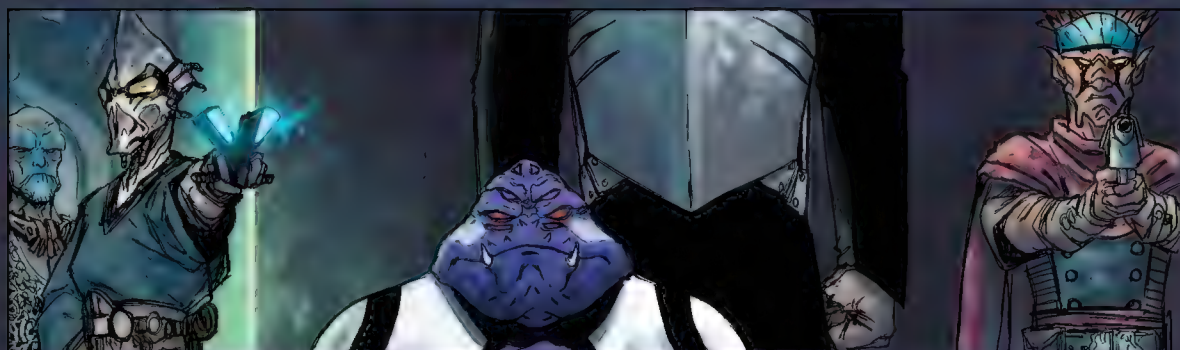
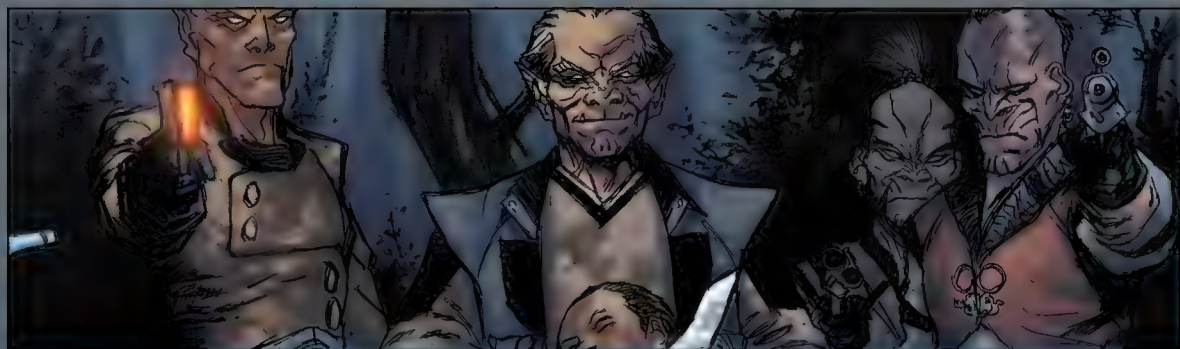
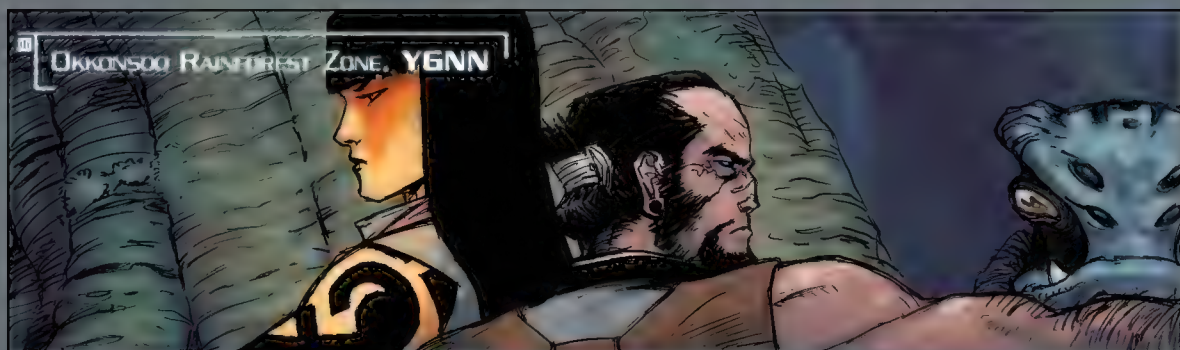
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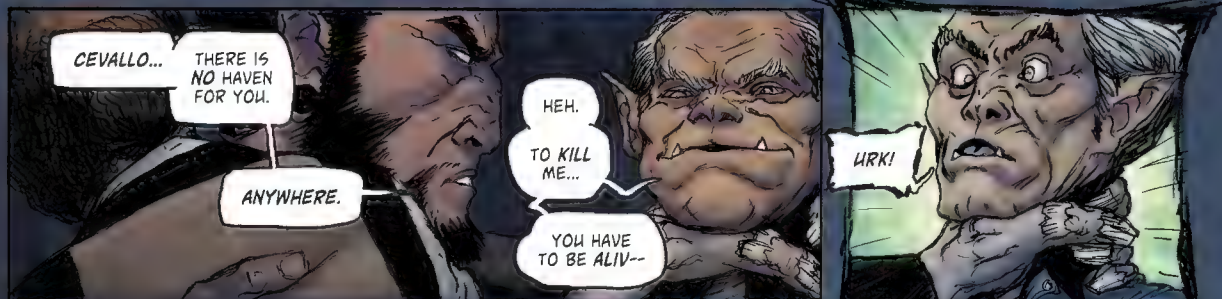
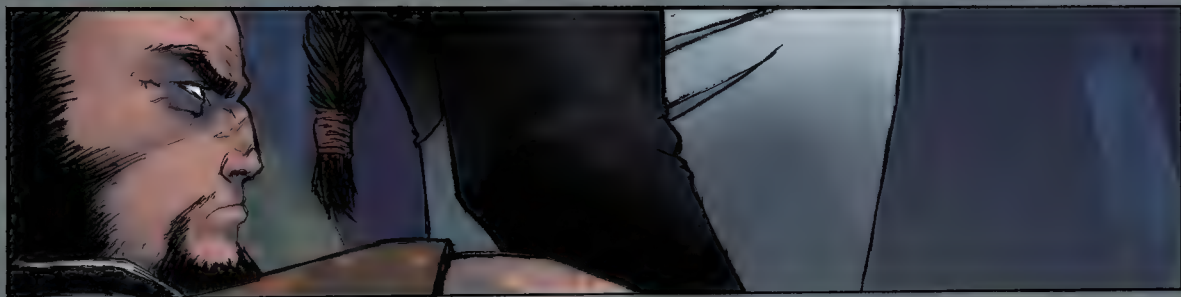
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THEY TRICKED ME.

IT WAS CEVALLO.

HE SOUNDED JUST LIKE DAD SO I OPENED THE BAY...

...AND THEN MINALARA'S DOG JUMPED AT HIM.

...BUT THEY KNOCKED THE DOG OUT.

...SOMEONE GRABBED ME AND NOW I'M HERE.

IT HAPPENED SO FAST.



TELL DAD I'M SORRY.

I KNOW SON...

HOLD ON TO ME TY.

JUST HOLD ON.



YOU MORON.

THE TIMER ON THE CANISTER'S BEEN ACTUATED.

YOU RISK ALL OUR LIVES TO GLOAT.

S... HRY...

NOW, TELL ME... DID YOU FETCH IT ALL?

OR...



...THE JOURNALS...

...AND... CHARTS...

...WE NEED.



GOOD DOG.

KHOTOK, LET HIM GO.



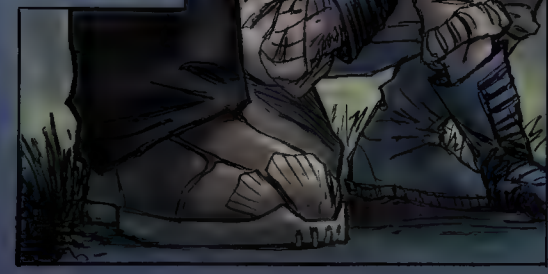
QUITE RIGHT...

DOGS KNOW TO HEEL.

YOU FELIDS... SO... TOUCHY.

DID ANY OF YOUR CREW TOUCH THEM TO SKIN AFTER THE SHOT?

WHO TIED THAT CREATURE UP?



<COUGH> <COUGH>--K YOU QAUREC.

I'M NO... <COUGH> ...DOG.



...SHOULD KHOTOK SQUEEZE?

...AYE...

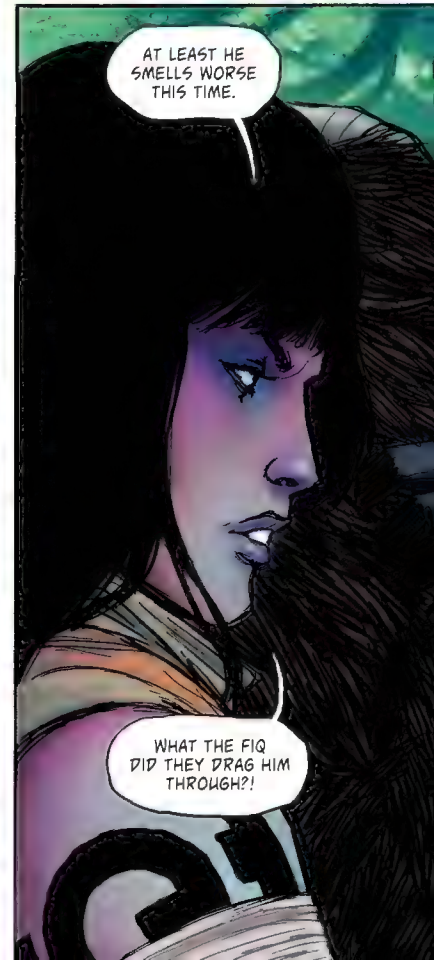
I...HKKK...

...GOT... ALL...



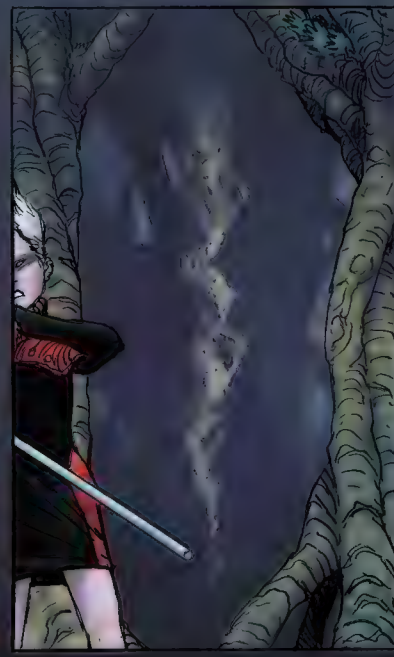
THIS IS SO FAMILIAR.

AGAIN I'M CARRYING AWAY THIS DOG AFTER A VILE MEETING WITH QAUREC AT WHICH A REPUGNANT AND MURKY DEAL OF UNREVEALED DECEPTION WAS STRUCK.



AT LEAST HE SMELLS WORSE THIS TIME.

WHAT THE FIQ DID THEY DRAG HIM THROUGH?!



BURN YOUR GLOVES.

ANYTHING THAT TOUCHED THEM.

KHOTOK, COLLECT THE JOURNALS.

SEND THE ALERTS.



WE'RE GOING
DIRECTLY TO THE
MED BEDS.

RUN TY'S
PATH-SCAN
FIRST...

...THEN YOUR
DOG.



HELP US,
PLEASE.

WE'RE
TRYING TO,
SON.

YOU'RE NOT
MY MOTHER...

...ARE YOU?

HE'S
DELIRIOUS.



YOU'RE
NOT MY
MOTHER...

...ARE YOU?



SECURE
THAT
CANISTER...

...AND
STRAP IN.

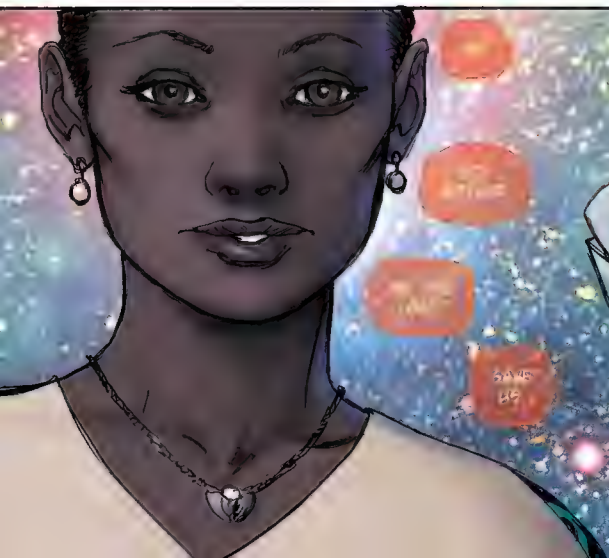
WE'RE
TAKING OFF
FAST.



GO!

I'VE GOT
THIS!

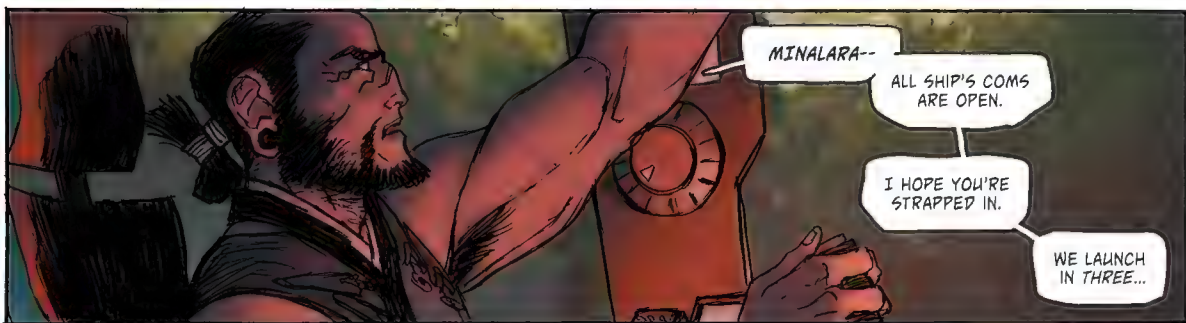
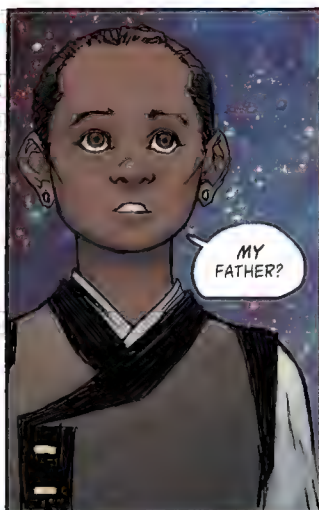
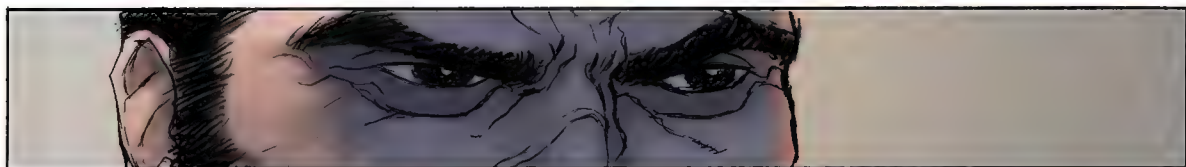
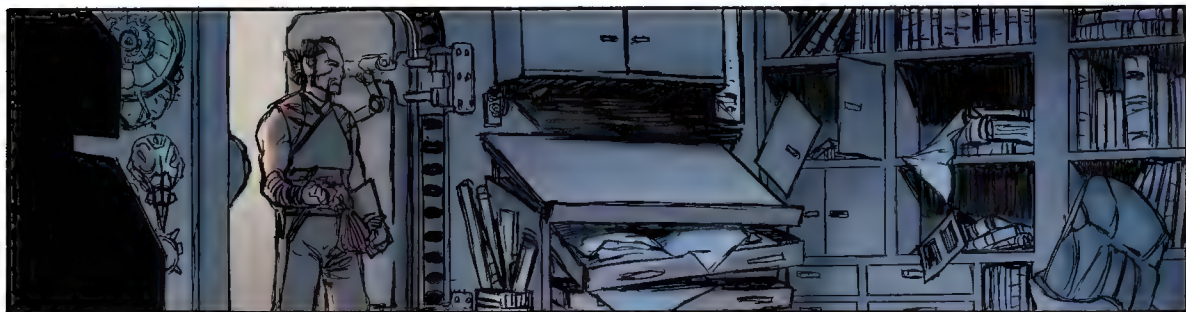
I'LL FIND
OUT WHAT
THEY GAVE
HIM.



SAVE
US.

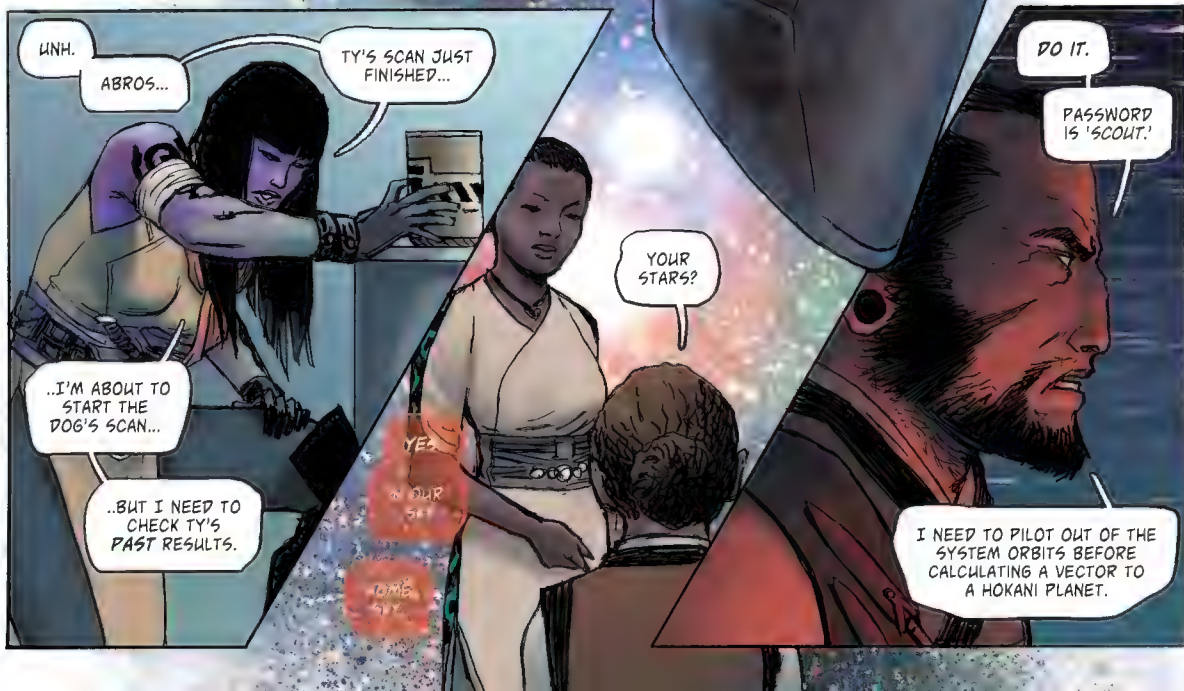
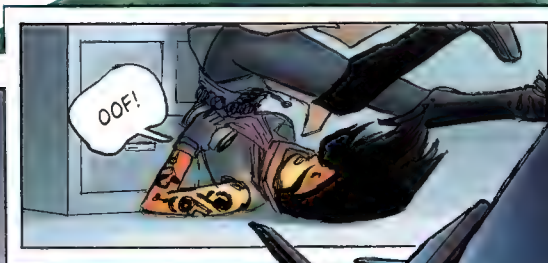
I'M TRYING
TO, KID...

...I'M TRYING...





NOW!!



A SHORT TIME LATER...



WHAT DID YOU FIND OUT?

WHY ARE YOU OUT OF BREATH?

I HAD TO SEARCH THE SHIP. BE SURE WE HAD NO STOWS.

AND?

NO ONE. WE'RE ALONE.



TY'S BEEN HEARING VOICES TOO.

I'M HERE SON.

I GAVE HIM MORE SEDATIVE.

DOG TOO.

THEY'RE OUT.



THERE!

DID YOU HEAR THAT?



HEAR WHAT?

I DIDN'T HEAR ANYTHING.



SOMEONE SPOKE.

I HEARD IT EARLIER...

...BUT CLEARER NOW...

AS SOON AS I TOUCHED TY.



DON'T TOUCH HIM AGAIN.

DID YOU RECOGNIZE THE VOICE?

WHAT DID IT SAY?

HOME. HELP US. GET HOME.

I DIDN'T RECOGNIZE THE VOICE.

WHY?



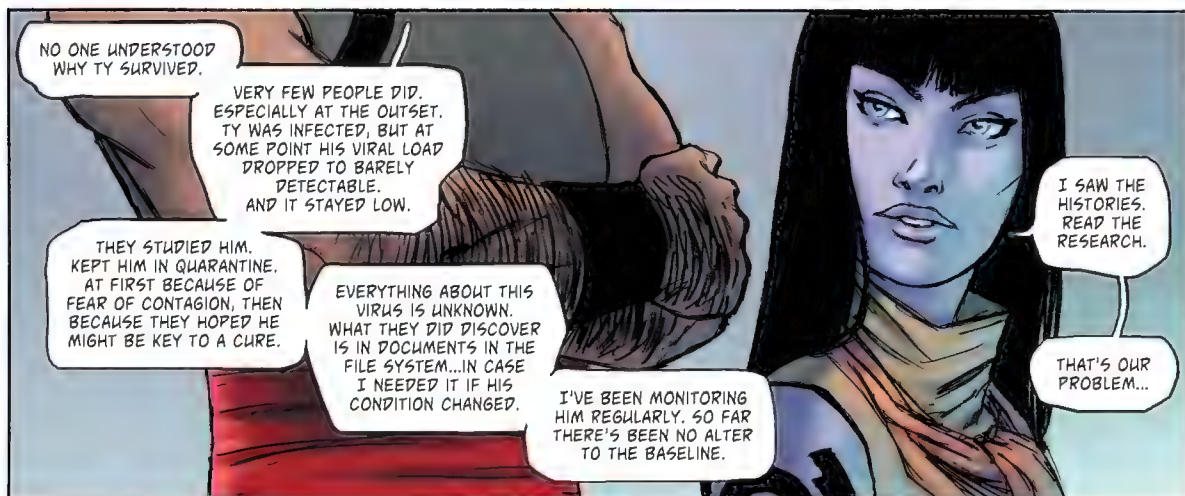
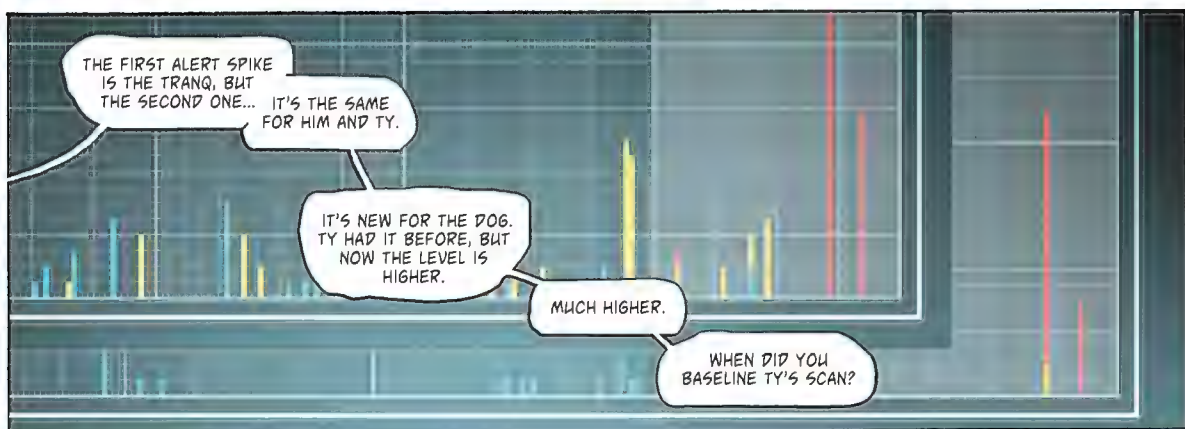
TY KNOWS THE VOICE HE HEARS.

HE'S BEEN MUTTERING TO HIMSELF.

AS IF HE'S HAVING BOTH SIDES OF A CONVERSATION. HALLUCINATING.

IT WAS WORRYING ME.

COME LOOK AT THIS.



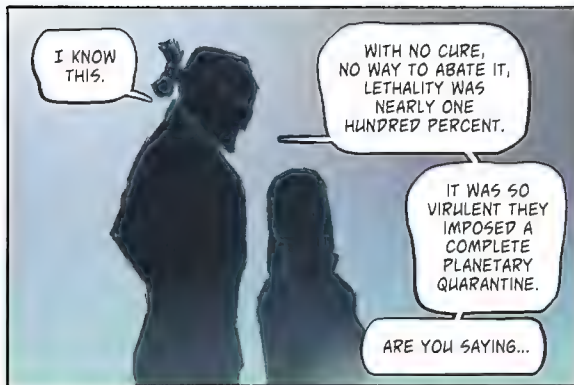


THE VIRUS IS SPREAD BY CONTACT. PERHAPS OTHER METHODS...BUT THEY'RE SURE OF CONTACT.

THE ORIGIN APPEARED TO BE A SHIP CRASH. ALL WERE DEAD, BUT THE FIRST RESPONDERS BECAME THE FIRST PATIENTS...THEN IT SWEEPED THE HOSPITALS...

FROM THERE, EVERYWHERE...

RAPIDLY.

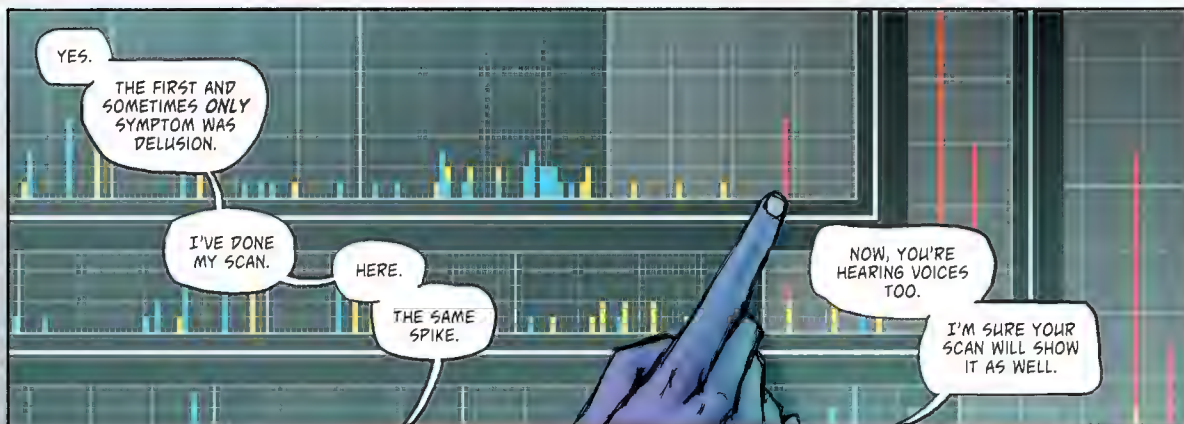


I KNOW THIS.

WITH NO CURE, NO WAY TO ABATE IT, LETHALITY WAS NEARLY ONE HUNDRED PERCENT.

IT WAS SO VIRULENT THEY IMPOSED A COMPLETE PLANETARY QUARANTINE.

ARE YOU SAYING...



YES.

THE FIRST AND SOMETIMES ONLY SYMPTOM WAS DELUSION.

I'VE DONE MY SCAN.

HERE.

THE SAME SPIKE.

NOW, YOU'RE HEARING VOICES TOO.

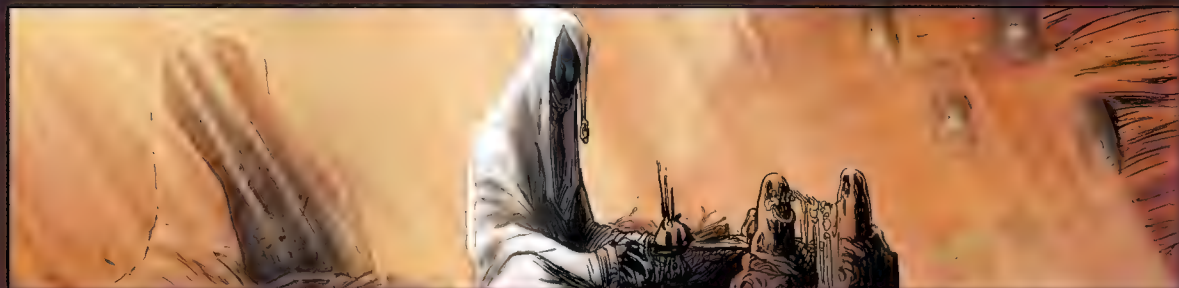
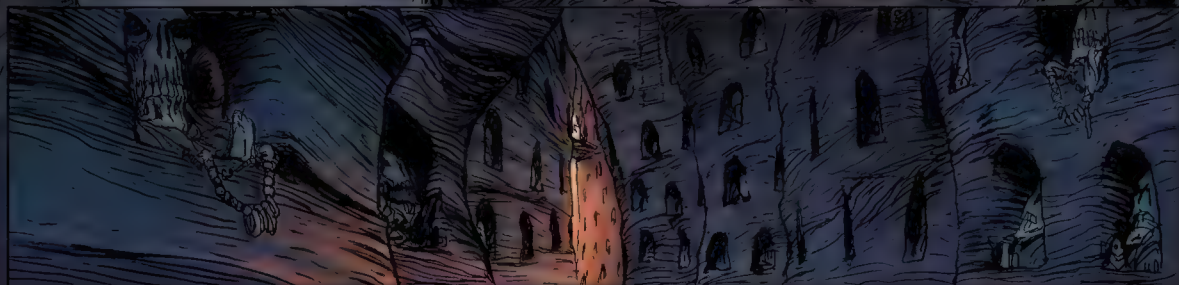
I'M SURE YOUR SCAN WILL SHOW IT AS WELL.



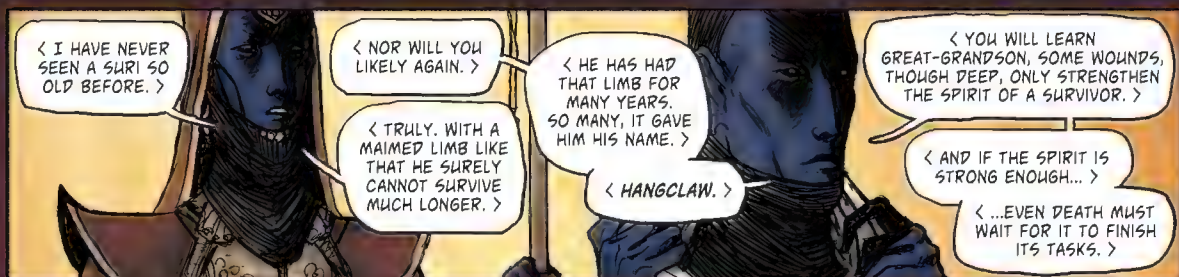
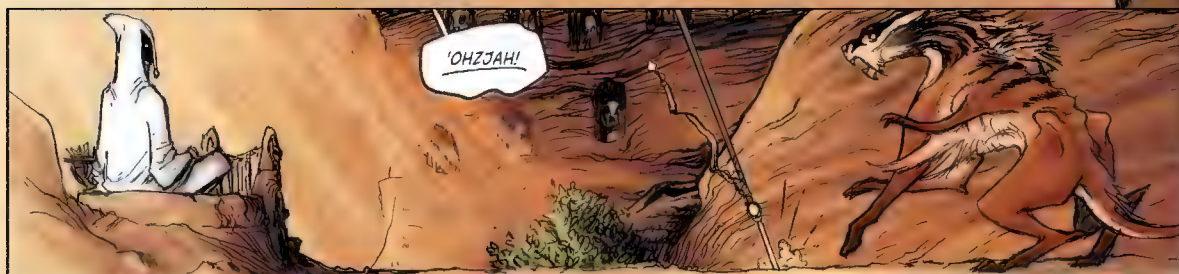
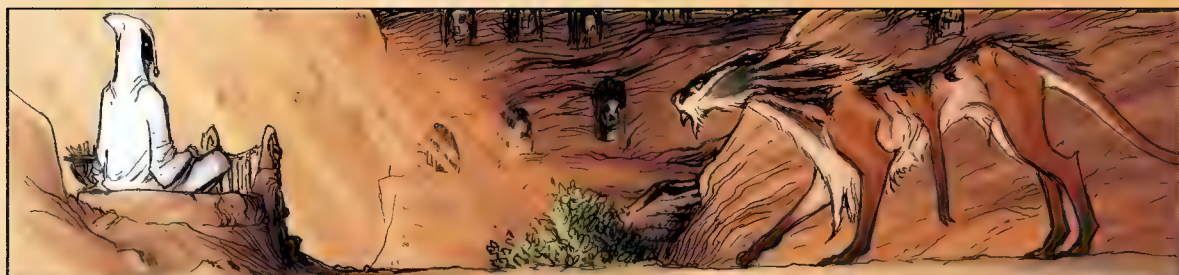
ABROS...

THEY GAVE US THE PLAGUE.









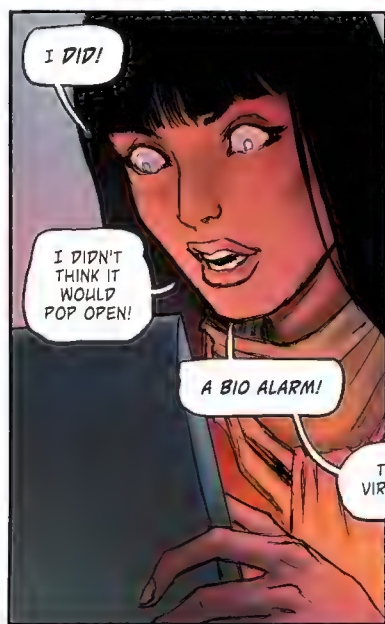




THE CANISTER!!!



I TOLD
YOU TO
SECURE IT!



I DID!

I DIDN'T
THINK IT
WOULD
POP OPEN!

A BIO ALARM!

THE
VIRUS...



...IT'S IN
THE AIR!



ABROS?

WHO IS THIS?

NOT HOME.

IRREGULAR.

HE IS HIS FATHER.

FATHER?

TO HELP US GET HOME.

HIM?

HE WILL HELP US FIND OUR STARS.

SAVE US.



THIS WILL HELP.

HELP HIM.

HELP US. WE.

THE FATHER.

WAYFINDER.

HUNTER.

FEAR.

TRUST.

STRONG.

GUIDE.

GUARDIAN.

YOUR SELF ATTACKS US.

BUT YOU ARE WEAK. JOINING IS WEAK.

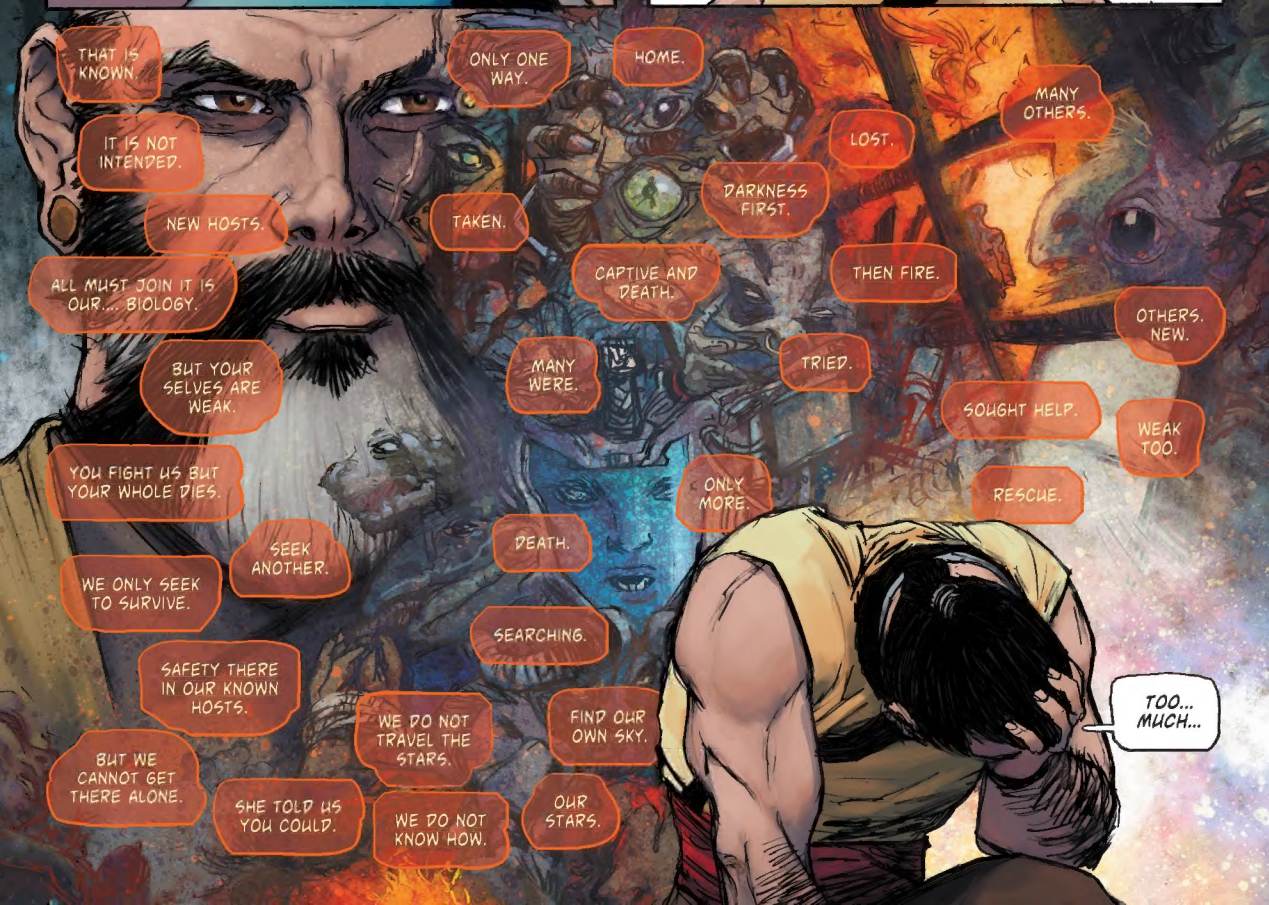
WE ARE LOST. SEPARATED.

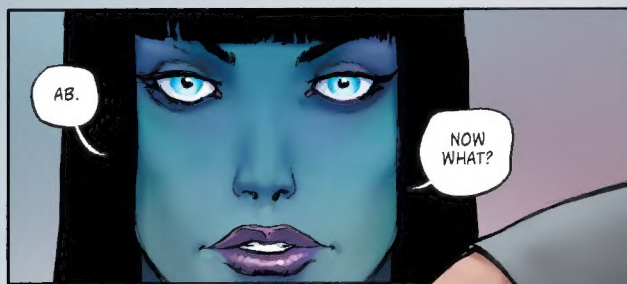
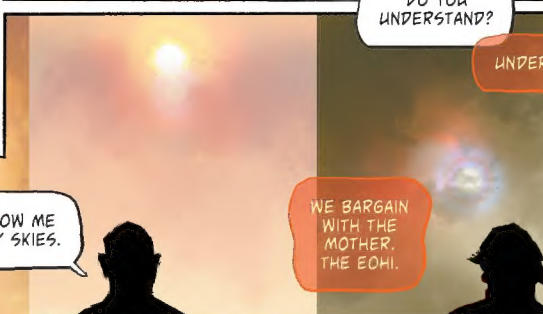
HELP US FIND OUR WAY HOME.

PLEASE.

JOIN US.







WE ARE
DEAD.

